ECLECTIC READINGS

ADVENTURES OF DEERSLAYER

NEW YORK · CINCINNATI · CHICAGO
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THE ADVENTURES OF DEERSLAYER

ADAPTED FROM
J. FENIMORE COOPER'S "DEERSLAYER"

BY

MARGARET N. HAIGHT

NEW YORK ·:· CINCINNATI ·:· CHICAGO
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY

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DEERSLAYER.

W. P. I

PREFATORY NOTE

Stories of the American Indian and his surroundings will ever have a fascination for the American boy and girl. Cooper's "Leather-Stocking Tales" are brimful of the most absorbing and exciting adventures of the savages and pioneers of our country. As one of our first great American novelists, Cooper deserves a closer acquaintance and better understanding than is generally given him. In this volume an attempt has been made to adapt his "Deerslayer" to the readier comprehension and interest of young readers. This has been accomplished by leaving out many lengthy descriptions, much moral discussion, and a great many details unnecessary to the main thread of the story.

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THE ADVENTURES OF DEERSLAYER

CHAPTER I

DEERSLAYER AND HURRY HARRY

One cloudless day in June, in the depths of a large forest, voices were heard calling to each other. The calls were in different tones and evidently came from two men who had lost their way and were searching in different directions for their path. At last a shout from one told that he was successful, and soon a man broke out of the tangled thicket of a swamp and came into an opening which had been made by heavy storms and fire. It was pretty well filled with dead trees, but afforded a good view of the sky.

"Here is room to breathe in!" exclaimed the forester, as soon as he found himself under a clear sky. He shook his huge frame like a mastiff that has just escaped from a snow bank.

"Hurrah, Deerslayer!" said Hurry Harry. "Here is daylight at last, and yonder is the lake."

He had scarcely said this when the second forester dashed aside the bushes of the swamp and appeared in the opening.

Hurry Harry's real name was Henry March, but he was so constantly on the move and had such a reckless offhand manner that he was known by his friends and companions as Hurry Harry and sometimes as Hurry Skurry. He was a large man, being over six feet four inches in height and very well proportioned. His face was good humored and handsome.

Deerslayer was a very different person in appearance, as well as in character. His figure was light and slender, and he did not have the good looks of his companion. His face would have had little to recommend it, except youth, were it not for an expression of truth, earnestness of purpose, and sincerity of feeling that seldom failed to win the confidence of others.

Both of these men were young, Hurry being the elder. Their clothes were made of dressed deerskins, but Deerslayer was the neater and more careful of his dress. His rifle was in perfect condition, the handle of his hunting knife was neatly carved, his powderhorn was ornamented with devices, and his shot pouch decorated with wampum. On the other hand, Hurry wore his garments and carried his arms in a careless, slovenly

fashion, as if he despised everything that had to do with clothes.

"Come, Deerslayer, fall to and prove that you have a Delaware stomach, as you say you have had a Delaware education," cried Hurry, opening his mouth to eat a slice of venison steak that would have made an entire meal for some people; "fall to, lad, and prove your manhood on this poor doe with your teeth, as you've already done with your rifle."

"Nay, Hurry, there is little manhood in killing a doe, though there might be some in killing a catamount. The Delawares have given me my name, 'Deerslayer,' not because of a bold heart, but on account of a quick eye and active foot," answered Deerslayer.

"Where did you say that the young Delaware chief, Chingachgook, was to meet you?" asked Hurry.

"At a small round rock near the foot of the lake where the tribes make treaties and bury their hatchets. This country is claimed by both Iroquois and Delawares, in time of peace, for hunting and fishing ground," said Deerslayer.

Hurry laughed. "Common territory!" he exclaimed. "I should like to know what Floating Tom Hutter would say to that. He claims the lake as his own property because he has lived on it for fifteen years."

"Who is Floating Tom Hutter?" asked Deerslayer.

"He lives," answered Hurry, "more like a musk-rat than anything else. He lives most of the time on the water in a boat that he has built himself. He has two daughters, Judith and Hetty, and some say that Tom was a pirate in his youth. That is the reason they think that he lives in those quiet woods, but no one is certain."

"Let us go," said Deerslayer, "if I am to meet Chingachgook and you wish to see this Floating Tom who is neither paleface nor Indian."

They had not far to go. Hurry March knew the direction as soon as he had found the open place. The forest was dark, but there was no underbrush. After walking about a mile, they stopped and began to examine with care the trunks of fallen trees, with which the ground was well sprinkled.

"This must be the place, Deerslayer. Here is a beech by the side of a hemlock with three pines near, and yonder is a birch with a broken top, and yet I see no rock nor any of their branches bent down," said Hurry.

"Look this way, Hurry, — here in line with the black oak. Don't you see that crooked sapling hooked up in the branches of the basswood near it? That sapling was once covered with snow and bent down to the ground

by its weight, but it never straightened itself, and some human hand fastened it among the basswood branches."

"That hand was mine!" exclaimed Hurry. "After all, Deerslayer, you are getting to have an uncommonly good eye for the woods."

"It's improving — it's improving, I will acknowledge; but it is a child's eye compared to some I know. There is Chingachgook, the Delaware, for instance."

"Who is this Chingachgook you talk so much about?" interrupted Hurry, as he moved off in the direction of the righted sapling; "a loping redskin at the best, I make no question."

"If he had his rights, he would be a great Indian chief; but, as it is, he is only a brave and just-minded Delaware," said Deerslayer, earnestly.

Just then the friends came to the trunk of a large linden or basswood tree which had fallen by its own weight. Decay had attacked its center, and now it lay moldering under the slow influence of the seasons.

"Here we have what we want," cried Hurry, looking in at the larger end, "everything is snug. Come, lend me a hand, Deerslayer, and we'll be afloat in half an hour."

The two went to work deliberately and regularly like men accustomed to that sort of employment. In the first place, Hurry removed some pieces of bark that

lay before the large opening in the tree. The two then drew out a bark canoe, containing its seats, paddles, and even fishing lines and rods. This was the way the white men often concealed their arms and boats from the Indians' sharp eyes. The boat was by no means light, but Hurry raised it on his shoulder with no help from Deerslayer.

"Lead ahead," said he, "and open the bushes; the rest I can do for myself."

The other obeyed, and the men left the spot, Deerslayer clearing the way for his friend. In about ten minutes' time they broke suddenly out into the brilliant light of the sun on a gravelly point that stretched out into a broad sheet of water. On all sides, wherever the men looked, they saw nothing but the mirror-like surface of the lake, the sky above, and the dense woods. The trees overhung the lake itself, shooting out toward the light; and there were miles along its eastern shore where a boat might have pulled beneath the branches of dark hemlocks, "quivering aspens," and melancholy pines. The scene now lay bathed in the sunlight of this balmy June day.

"This is grand! It is an education in itself to look upon," exclaimed Deerslayer, as he leaned on his rifle and gazed around. "But what is that I see over there,

Hurry, that seems too small for an island and too large for a boat although it stands in the midst of the water?"

"Why, that," said Hurry, "is Muskrat Castle where Floating Tom spends much of his time. He has two homes: this one which never moves and another called the ark which floats. The latter is down in the southern part of the lake, or anchored in one of the bays. The canoe is ready, and in fifteen minutes will carry two such paddles as yours and mine to the castle."

They placed the seats and paddles in the canoe and, getting in, pushed off from land. Hurry sat in the stern while Deerslayer placed himself forward, and by steady strokes they were soon nearing Muskrat Castle.

"Do the redskins often visit this lake, Hurry?" asked Deerslayer.

"Why, they come and go. The country belongs to no particular tribe, and so it has fallen into the hands of Floating Tom," answered his companion.

"Right glad am I that Chingachgook has appointed our meeting on this lake," said Deerslayer, thoughtfully, "for I have never seen such a beautiful spectacle."

Now the canoe was so close to the castle that it needed but one stroke of the paddle to reach the landing. This was a platform in front of the entrance, about twenty feet square.

"Old Tom calls this his dooryard," observed Hurry, as they fastened the canoe.

Muskrat Castle stood in the open lake at a distance of fully a quarter of a mile from the nearest shore. The house stood on piles, with the water flowing beneath it. The sides and ends were composed of the trunks of large pines placed upright. The floors were made of smaller logs, and the roof of light poles well covered with bark. Deerslayer saw that it would not be easy for Indians to attack the building. While Hurry was bustling about the dooryard examining the fishing traps, rods, and nets, Deerslayer entered the building.

The entire space, some twenty by forty feet, was divided into several sleeping rooms, and an apartment which served both as a living room and kitchen. The furniture was rude, but there was a clock with a handsome case of dark wood and dark massive chest. No one seemed to be at home. As Hurry said, the whole family was off on a "voyage of discovery in the ark."

"I see Tom has been trying his hand at beaver catching," observed Hurry, when Deerslayer had come out. "If you are disposed to remain here, Deerslayer, we can make a comfortable season out of it, for while the old man and I trap the beaver, you can fish and knock down deer."

"Thank you, Hurry, thank you with all my heart. It is true the Delawares call me Deerslayer, but it is not so much because I can kill the bucks and does as because, that while I do kill them, I've never yet taken the life of a fellow-creature. They say their traditions do not tell of another who has killed so many animals and has not killed a man."

"I hope they do not call you chicken-hearted, lad," said Hurry.

"I don't believe they count me out-of-the-way cowardly, though they may not count me out-of-the-way brave. But I'm not quarrelsome, and that goes a great way toward keeping blood off the hands among the hunters and redskins."

As the two men found no one at home, they decided to go in search of the ark, Floating Tom's other home. Before they set off, however, Hurry carefully examined the whole of the northern end of the water with a ship's glass that belonged to Tom.

"It is as I thought," said he, laying aside the glass; "the old fellow is drifting about the south end this fine weather and has left the castle to defend itself. It will be but a small matter to paddle down and hunt him up in his hiding place."

"Let us keep a good lookout lest we pass him

as he lies hidden under the bushy shore," said Deerslayer.

This lake was called by the hunters and trappers Glimmerglass. The Indians called it by the same name as that of its outlet, the Susquehanna. To-day we call it Lake Otsego. Between the years 1740–1745, the time when the incidents of this tale took place, the Indians called Iroquois were at war with the allied tribes of Delawares and Mohicans. Deerslayer had been educated among the Delawares, and had grown to know and love many of that tribe.

CHAPTER II

THE ARK

DEERSLAYER was not wrong in calling the borders of the lake "bushy." Along its whole length the smaller trees overhung the water, with their branches dipping into it. The banks were steep and covered with vegetation of all descriptions. There were many points and bays, so that the outline of the lake was broken and irregular. The canoe kept along the western side, for Hurry was afraid to go out in the middle before he saw what enemies might be lurking behind the points or concealed among the bushes. He explained to Deerslayer, as they moved swiftly along, that there was a shallow bay formed by a long, low point called Rat's Cove because it was the favorite haunt of the muskrat. This made such a complete cover for the ark that Tom was fond of anchoring there whenever he found it convenient. The point instead of thrusting itself out into the water like all the others ran in a line with the main shore. In the bay and around the extremity of the point the water was so deep that it appeared black.

"We shall soon see the ark," said Hurry, as they glided around the point in question. "Tom loves to burrow up among the rushes."

A dry stick cracked on the narrow strip of land. Both men started and reached after their rifles.

"It sounded like the tread of a man," whispered Hurry.

"I'll land," returned Deerslayer, "and cut off the creature's retreat at the point, whether Indian or musk-rat. Put your paddle in the water, and send the canoe to that log."

He was soon on shore and creeping softly into the thicket. As he reached the center, the dry twigs cracked again. It sounded as if somebody was walking slowly toward the point. Hurry heard these sounds, too, and pushing the canoe off into the bay, seized his rifle. All was quiet; then a noble buck walked out of the woods to the sandy extremity of the point and began to drink. Hurry raised his rifle to his shoulder, took sight, and fired. The echo rolled from hill to hill for miles and seemed to waken the whole forest. The buck shook his head, leaped forward into the water, and began to swim toward the foot of the lake. Hurry shouted and was about to chase him when Deerslayer signed to him to return.

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"Hurry raised his rifle."

"It was foolish to pull a trigger before we had looked to see that no enemies were harbored near the shore."

"It was an awful mistake to miss that buck," returned Hurry.

"The creature's death could have done us no good and might have done us harm."

They were now near the place where they might expect to find the ark.

"There's the rock," said Hurry, standing up in the canoe to look about him; "and I know that the outlet begins near it."

This rock was not large, but the water had washed around it for centuries so that it looked like a beehive, its form being very regular and even. Hurry whispered, as they floated past, that this spot was known to all Indians in that part of the country as a meeting-place. Now the water became a narrow stream with a strong current. Bushes still lined the shore, but they were farther apart.

"There's the old fellow!" whispered Hurry. He pointed to the figure of a man eight or ten feet away who was up to his knees in mud and water, and who was looking after traps and bait. There was no sign of any ark.

"Probably Judith is braiding her hair by the side of

some spring where she can see her pretty face," said the hunter.

"Probably she is doing some housework for her father in the ark," retorted Deerslayer.

"It is a pleasure to hear the truth from a man's tongue," said a girl's voice, so near the canoe that it made the men start. A head was seen through the leaves within reach of Deerslayer's paddle. Not knowing it, the men had stopped alongside of the boat which was hidden behind the bushes, and Judith had only pushed aside the leaves in front of a window in order to speak to them.

The ark was very simply built. A large scow formed the floating part of the vessel; and in its center, occupying the whole of its breadth and about two thirds of its length, stood a low building made of light materials. This was divided into two parts: one was a parlor and bedroom for the father, and the other the daughters' room. The kitchen was in one end of the scow, away from the cabin. This singular boat was moved by paddles and by lines with stones and anchors attached, which were flung out ahead of the vessel. Tom by pulling on these hauled himself up to them, and thus by aid of an oar astern would move along with some degree of rapidity.

Both foresters leaped on board, and while Hurry talked with Judith, Deerslayer entered the cabin and examined carefully the way this remarkable "ark" was built. Coming out through the door opposite to the one he had entered, he saw Judith's sister seated under the leafy canopy made by the overhanging trees.

Hetty Hutter was what we nowadays call feeble-minded. Deerslayer's education among the Indians had taught him to treat with great tenderness and pity all persons so afflicted.

"You are Hetty Hutter?" asked he. "Harry March has told me about you, and I know you must be the child."

"Yes, I am Hetty. What is *your* name?"

"That's a question more easily asked than answered," replied Deerslayer. "Although I am so young, yet I have borne more names than some of the greatest chiefs in America."

"Tell me all your names," said Hetty, busying herself with some coarse needlework.

"Well, I have no objection." Deerslayer leaned on his rifle and looked at her kindly. "First, my real Christian name is Nathaniel Bumppo. The Delawares found out that I was not given to lying, so they called me 'Straight-tongue.' After a while they discovered

that I was quick of foot, so they named me 'The Pigeon.' Then because they said I was as wise and knowing as a hound I was called 'Lap-ear.' When I became rich enough to buy a rifle, then it was seen I could keep a wigwam in venison — and in time I got the name of 'Deerslayer,' which I now bear."

"Your last name is a very good one," said Hetty.

Then Deerslayer explained how he happened to come there, how he was to meet Chingachgook at the rock the next day, and how he had met Hurry and they had decided to journey together.

The owner of the ark, Floating Tom, now appeared. He said that he had found the moccasin of an Indian floating in the water, which meant that enemies were near. Hurry and Deerslayer agreed that it would be safer to move the ark out into the lake; for after examining the moccasin, it was found to be one of the Iroquois, who were unfriendly toward the white men. They loosened the lines that bound the scow, and the boat moved slowly toward the lake.

"Judith and Hetty," called their father, "leave the oars and go in the cabin. Hurry, we will go in this outer room, and, Deerslayer, you keep moving from window to window and take care not to let your head be seen."

The ark was just then passing under trees that were

fairly locked together overhead. The current was swift and deep. Deerslayer had crossed the room to look out of the western window. A tree, which when a sapling had been pressed down by the weight of the snow, overhung the water in nearly a half circle. On this tree no less than six Indians appeared, each bent on running out on the trunk and dropping on the roof of the ark as it passed beneath.

"Pull, Hurry!" Deerslayer cried, "pull for your life!"

The others knew that Deerslayer had seen something, and the ark immediately redoubled its motion. The Indians saw that they were discovered; with a fearful whoop they leaped toward the boat. There were six and each tried to reach the deck. All but the leader fell into the river. He struck the scow just within the stern, and for a moment he was slightly stunned. At this instant Judith rushed from the cabin, and with all her strength pushed the unconscious redskin over the edge into the water. Deerslayer quickly pulled her back into the cabin, and no sooner had she reached this shelter than the forest was filled with yells, and bullets began to patter against the logs of the boat. But the scow was now moving so rapidly that it was soon in the open lake, far enough from the shore for the occupants to feel safe.

CHAPTER III

THE ADVENTURE WITH THE CANOES

HUTTER set up a large square sail, and this added so much to the motion of the scow as to do away with the oars. In about two hours the castle was seen rising out of the water. The sail was lowered, and by degrees the scow drifted to the building and was moored to one of the piles.

No one had visited the house since Hurry and his companion had left. Hutter told his daughters not to use lights (for by this time it had become quite dark), as the enemy was near.

"The great object for people situated as we are," said Tom, to the young men, "is to command the water. Now there are five canoes on this lake, and we own them all. Three we have with us, and the other two are hidden in hollow logs on the shore."

"The sooner those two canoes can be brought to the castle, the better," said Deerslayer, "for the Indians will leave no place unexamined."

The others agreed with him, and at midnight they embarked in a canoe for the shore. Hutter alone knew where the boats were hidden, and he directed the course while the others used the paddles.

"Let us look about for a moment, men," said Hutter, in a low voice, when they were about a league from the castle. "We must now be all eyes and ears, for these Indians have noses like bloodhounds."

The darkness had increased though the night was still clear, and the light of the stars sufficed for all purposes of the three. The men strained their eyes to see whether some thread of smoke was not still stealing along the mountain side as it arose from the dying embers of a fire. Nothing could be traced, and it was thought safe to land. The bows of the canoe ground upon a gravelly beach with a gentle motion. Hutter and Hurry immediately landed, the former carrying his own and his friend's rifle, leaving Deerslayer in charge of the canoe. The hollow log lay a little distance up the side of the mountain, and the old man led the way toward it, stopping at every third or fourth step to listen. The same deathlike stillness, however, reigned on the midnight scene, and the desired place was soon reached.

"This is it," whispered Hutter, laying a foot on the

trunk of a fallen linden; "hand me the paddles first, and draw the boat out with care."

This was done, Hurry raised it to his shoulder, and the two began the return to the shore. The descent was steep, and toward the end of their little journey Deerslayer was obliged to land and meet them in order to help lift the canoe through the bushes. When they had embarked again and reached the center of the lake, Hutter cast it adrift. He knew that it would float slowly up the lake before the southerly breeze, and he intended to find it on his return. Then they held their way down the lake for the other. They steered toward the very point where Hurry had tried to kill the deer.

They landed safely, and again Hurry and Hutter left Deerslayer to guard the boat while they launched the hidden canoe. Now they had the three boats in their possession and were no longer anxious. They landed together and stood on the gravelly point, consulting.

"If they wish to visit the castle," said Hurry, chuckling, "let them wade or swim."

Just then at the foot of the bay that the point made, they saw a flickering light — a camp fire. Hutter thought that it must be the women and children of a party of Indians, and he and Hurry determined to find out.

"Deerslayer, you take the canoe and paddle off into the lake with the spare boat and set it adrift as we did the other," said Hurry. "After that you float along the edge of the point, keeping as near the head of the bay as you can. If there is any trouble, I will call like a loon; that will be the signal."

The young hunter obeyed and set the canoe adrift, first taking out the paddles, so that it could not be made use of if an Indian did capture it. Then he anchored among the rushes outside the point by holding fast to a stem of one of the drooping plants. Here he remained waiting, endeavoring to catch the smallest sound. The gloom of night threw its shadowy forms around the lake, the forest, and the hills.

About an hour and a half after his companions had gone, he heard the quavering cry of the loon, a bird which haunted the American lakes. But Deerslayer knew that Hurry could not imitate its cry so perfectly, and that it must be the call of the real bird. So he decided to stay where he was.

He had hardly come to this determination when the profound stillness of the night and solitude was broken by a cry so startling as to drive all thought of the loon's call from Deerslayer's mind. He released his hold of the rush and dashed his paddle into the water;

he did not know what to do — he did not know where to steer.

The sounds of the breaking of branches, the cracking of dried sticks, and the fall of feet appeared to approach the water, though a little farther north than the spot where Deerslayer was. He urged his canoe ahead, and reached a part of the shore where its banks were high and quite steep. Men were evidently thrashing through the bushes and trees on the summit of this bank. Five or six rifles flashed, and the opposite hills gave back the rolling echoes. Deerslayer urged his canoe forward to the rescue. His paddle had not been raised twice when the voice of Hurry was heard, and he stumbled forward upon the narrow beach literally loaded down with enemies.

"Let up, you painted redskins — let up!" cried Hurry.

This satisfied Deerslayer that his friends were prisoners and that to land would be to share their fate. He was already within a hundred feet of the shore when he discovered this. Luckily, the Indians had dropped their rifles while in pursuit of the two white men.

"Keep off the land, lad," called Hutter. "The girls have only you. God will prosper you as you aid my children."

"The girls shall be looked to," answered Deerslayer, "as well as the castle."

The prisoners were bound and taken away through the wood.

Deerslayer was alone with the blackness of night and the deathlike stillness about him. For a few moments he was motionless. Then dropping his paddle in the water, he proceeded toward the center of the lake. He did not stop until he caught sight of both the canoes. Seeing that they were slowly drifting northward and knowing that he must have a few hours' rest if he wished to do anything to-morrow, he lay down in the bottom of the canoe and was soon asleep.

CHAPTER IV

THE ADVENTURE WITH THE INDIANS

When Deerslayer opened his eyes, it was morning. His first thought was for the canoes and their position. During the night they had drifted miles and were now abreast of the castle and the ark which was fastened to its piles; but they were now too near to the foot of the mountain for safety, and he saw that the one ahead of him was about to touch the little point of land. He knew it would touch before he could possibly reach it; so he made no haste, but first looking to the priming of his rifle, he softly paddled in that direction.

When about one hundred yards from shore, he gave three or four vigorous strokes of his paddle sufficient to impel the canoe to land without further rowing. He seized his rifle. Just as he was raising it, a sharp report followed by the buzz of a bullet passed so near his body as to cause him to start. Deerslayer staggered and fell his whole length into the canoe. A yell followed; an Indian leaped from the bushes and bounded toward the boat. This was what Deerslayer

expected. He rose and leveled his own rifle, but his finger hesitated about pulling the trigger on one whom he held at such a disadvantage. This pause saved the Indian's life, for he bounded back into the bushes as quickly as he had come out.

In the meantime Deerslayer had been nearing land. His canoe touched shore, a few yards from the other boat. There was not time to seize it and take it beyond danger before he would be exposed to another shot. He therefore immediately dashed into the woods for shelter.

No sooner had the young hunter hidden behind a tree than he saw the redskin in the shelter of an oak reloading his rifle. Instead of advancing to fire, Deerslayer dropped his rifle and said to himself:

"Let him have time to load, and then we'll take it out like men. It might be redskin warfare to fire now, but not Christian."

His rifle loaded, the Indian glanced around him and came forth from behind the oak until he was fairly exposed. Then Deerslayer stepped from his cover and hailed him.

"This way, redskin, this way, if you're looking for me," he called out. "I'm young in war, but not so young as to stand on an open beach to be shot down

like an owl by daylight. It rests with yourself whether it's peace or war between us."

The savage was a good deal startled. He had a little knowledge of English, however, and caught the drift of the other's meaning.

"Two canoe," he said in the deep guttural tones of his race, holding up two fingers; "one for you — one for me."

"No, no, Mingo, that will never do. You own neither, and neither shall you have as long as I can prevent it. Likely enough there will be occasion to strike a blow at some of your people; still, I wish it to be done in fair fight and not in a quarrel about a miserable canoe."

"Good! My brother very young, but he very wise. Little warrior — great talker."

The savage walked forward holding out his hand with smiling face. Deerslayer shook hands with him cordially.

"All have his own," said the Indian; "my canoe mine, your canoe your'n."

They walked side by side to the shore. Deerslayer put his foot against the end of the boat in dispute, and gave it a shove that sent it out into the lake a hundred feet or more.

"Farewell, brother," said the Indian. "He go to home in water, Indian go to camp."

The savage walked calmly away with his rifle in the hollow of his arm, and the white man began to make preparations for departure. He might have been thus employed a minute when, happening to turn his face toward the land, he saw the black, ferocious eyes of the savage glancing on him, like those of the crouching tiger, through a small opening in the bushes, and the muzzle of his rifle seemed already to be in a line with our hero's body.

To cock and poise his rifle were the acts of a single moment for Deerslayer. He fired into the bushes where he knew the savage's body ought to be. At the same instant the Indian fired.

The savage uttered a yell, leaped through the bushes, and came bounding across the open ground flourishing a tomahawk. Deerslayer did not move, but stood with his unloaded rifle resting against his shoulder. When about forty feet from his enemy, the savage hurled the weapon; but it was with a hand so unsteady and feeble that the young man caught it by the handle. The next moment the Indian staggered and fell his whole length on the ground.

Deerslayer tossed the tomahawk into the canoe and

advanced to his victim's side. He stood over him leaning on his rifle and gazed at him sorrowfully. It was the first man he had seen fall in battle — it was the first fellow-creature against whom he had ever raised his hand.

"Water!" said the thirsty Indian; "give poor Indian water."

The white man raised him in his arms and helped him appease his burning thirst; after which, he seated himself on a stone and took the head of the wounded man in his lap.

"Good! What Indian call him?" said the dying savage.

"Deerslayer."

"That good name for boy — poor name for warrior. No Deerslayer — Hawkeye — Hawkeye — Hawkeye. Shake hand."

Deerslayer grasped the hand of the poor redskin and held it until he had drawn his last breath.

There was no longer any time for delay. Deerslayer quickly proceeded to collect his canoes in order to tow them to the castle. He soon had the one in tow, but the other had all this time been floating up the lake. His eye was no sooner fastened on this last boat than it struck him that it was nearer to the shore than

it would have been had it merely followed the course of the gentle breeze. He suspected an unseen current in the water.

A few vigorous strokes of the paddle carried him still nearer, when the mystery was explained. Something was evidently in motion on the off-side of the canoe, and a closer view showed that it was a naked human arm. An Indian was lying in the bottom of the boat and was propelling it slowly but certainly to the shore, using his hand as a paddle. Deerslayer understood the whole affair at a glance. While he was occupied on the point, a savage had swum out to the canoe and was now urging it to shore.

"If you've enjoyed yourself enough in that canoe, redskin," Deerslayer coolly observed to the startled savage, "you'll do a prudent act by taking to the lake again, before we get to hot words."

The savage did not understand English, but the sight of the rifle that lay so near the hand of the white man quickened him. He crouched like a tiger about to take a leap, gave a yell, and the next instant disappeared in the water. By the time he had reached land, Deerslayer, with the three canoes, was beyond rifle shot on the way to the castle, where Judith and Hetty were anxiously awaiting him.

CHAPTER V

THE MEETING WITH CHINGACHGOOK

NEITHER of the girls spoke as Deerslayer stood before them alone.

"Father!" Judith at length exclaimed with a desperate effort.

"He's met with misfortune, and there's no use in concealing it," answered Deerslayer, in his direct and simple manner. "He and Hurry are in the hands of the Iroquois, and Heaven only knows what's to be the termination. I've got the canoes safe, and that's a consolation. At sunset we'll be reënforced by Chingachgook if I can manage to get him into a canoe; and then I think we two can answer for the ark and the castle till some of the officers in the garrisons hear of this warpath, and we may look for help from that quarter."

Deerslayer then commenced a clear narrative of all that had happened during the night. Neither of the girls showed the alarm and concern that would have been felt by those who were less accustomed to

the dangers and accidents of frontier life. Judith seemed the more distressed, while Hetty brooded in melancholy silence. Little was said, however, by either, the sisters busying themselves preparing breakfast, which was eaten by all three in silence.

After they had finished, Judith asked, "Who is this Chingachgook; why does he come here?"

"In his tribe," answered Deerslayer, "there is a powerful chief who has a daughter called Wah-ta-Wah, which in our language means Hist-oh-Hist. She went with her father and mother two moons ago to fish for salmon on the western streams, and while thus employed the girl vanished. For several weeks we could get no tidings of her; but some ten days ago a runner that came through the Delaware country brought us a message. She is with the Iroquois, the enemy. The message said that the party intended to hunt and forage through this region for a month or two, and that if we could contrive to get on a scent in this quarter, something might turn up that would lead to our getting the maiden off."

"How does that concern you?" said Judith.

"It concerns me as all things that touch a friend concern a friend," said Deerslayer, simply. "I'm here as Chingachgook's aid and helper."

Little was to be feared during the day. They were in possession of the canoes and the ark, and no other vessel was to be found on the lake. Nevertheless, Deerslayer well knew that a raft was soon made, and as dead trees were to be found in abundance near the water, it would not be a difficult matter for the savages to find means, did they think of making an assault.

As the day went on, the party in the castle made plans and preparations, and so busy were they that they felt surprised when the sun began to descend toward the pine-clad summits of the western hills. At length the hour arrived when it became necessary to go to the rock appointed as a meeting place with the Mohican or Delaware, as Chingachgook was more commonly called. As the plans for departure had been thought out by Deerslayer and told to the girls, all set about their execution together.

Hetty went into the ark, and fastening two of the canoes together, she entered one and paddled up to a sort of gateway in the palisadoes that surrounded the castle, through which she pushed both boats. She fastened them under the house to chains that were secured within the building. These palisadoes were trunks of trees driven firmly into the mud, and served the double purpose of forming a small inclosure and

of keeping away at arm's length any enemy that might approach in boats. Canoes thus docked were hidden from sight, and as the gate was properly barred and fastened, it would not be an easy task to remove them. Before closing the gate, however, Judith also entered with the third canoe, leaving Deerslayer busy in securing doors and windows inside the building over her head. As everything was strong and small saplings were used as bars, it would have been the work of an hour or two to break into the building when Deerslayer had finished his task.

As soon as all was fast inside, he appeared at a trap-door, from which he descended into the canoe of Judith. There he fastened this door with a stout padlock and staples. Hetty was received in the same canoe, which was now shoved outside of the palisadoes. The next precaution was to fasten the gate and to carry the keys into the ark.

Deerslayer took a careful survey of the entire shore of the lake. Not a living thing was to be seen, except a few birds, and they fluttered about in the shade of the trees as if unwilling to encounter the heat of the sultry afternoon.

"Nothing is stirring," said Deerslayer, as they prepared to enter the ark. "The vagabonds may have

a raft in the woods, but it has not yet been brought down to the lake. They can't guess that we are about to leave the castle, and if they did, they've no means of knowing where we intend to go."

"That is true, Deerslayer," returned Judith; "we may now go on without the fear of being followed, or else we shall be behind our time."

"No! no! for though the savages are in the dark as to Chingachgook and the rock, they've eyes and legs and will see in what direction we stir and be certain to follow us. I will head the scow in all manner of ways, first in one quarter and then in another, until they get to be leg weary and tired of tramping after us," said Deerslayer.

This artifice was well managed, and soon Deerslayer checked the drift of the ark as the outlet came in view. He told Judith and Hetty to enter the cabin, and crouching himself so as to conceal his body by the frame of the scow, began to make the best of his way toward the rock, which was slowly appearing. He thought it imprudent to venture too near shore; he dropped the grapnel and "paid-out" line until he was within eighteen feet of the desired spot.

"Is the rock empty, Judith?" asked he. "Is anything to be seen of the chief?"

"Nothing, Deerslayer," called Judith.

"Keep close, Judith! keep close, Hetty! A rifle has a prying eye, a nimble foot, and a fatal tongue. 'Twould grieve me to the heart did any harm befall either of you."

"And you, Deerslayer," exclaimed Judith, "do you keep close; a bullet might be as fatal to you as to one of us, and a blow that you felt would be felt by all."

Judith uttered an exclamation.

"What is it? — what is it?" Deerslayer demanded.

"There's a man on the rock, an Indian warrior in his paint, and armed!"

"Where does he wear his hawk's feather? Is it fast to the warlock, or does he carry it above the left ear?"

"It is, as you say, above the left ear."

"God be praised! It is the Serpent at last!" and Deerslayer let the line slip through his hands until hearing a light bound in the other end of the boat, he began to haul in again.

At that moment the warrior, Chingachgook, darted through the little cabin and stood at Deerslayer's side.

"Hugh!" he said.

The next instant shrieks from Judith and Hetty filled the air, and rising above their cries were heard

the yells of twenty or more savages, who came leaping through the branches down the bank.

"Pull, Deerslayer!" cried Judith, barring the door through which Chingachgook had just entered. "Pull, for Heaven's sake! The lake is full of savages wading after us!"

Chingachgook and Deerslayer needed no second bidding, and the scow rapidly glided ahead into deep water.

"What now, Judith? What next? Do they still follow?" demanded Deerslayer, when he heard a scream and laugh from Judith almost in the same breath.

"They have vanished! One, the last, is just disappearing among the bushes. We are all safe!"

The two men made another great effort, pulled the ark up to the grapnel, and when the floating house lay several hundred feet from the shore, they let the anchor drop again, for there was no longer any danger.

Chingachgook, a tall and handsome young Indian warrior, examined his rifle with care, opening the pan to make sure that the priming was not wet. He looked at the two girls, but still he did not speak. He thought it like a woman to ask questions.

"Judith and Hetty," said Deerslayer, "this is the

Indian chief of whom you've heard me speak, Chingachgook, as he is called, which means Big Serpent, so named for his wisdom and cunning, my earliest and latest friend."

Chingachgook shook hands with the girls in a courteous manner, and then Deerslayer and he took their seats on the head of the scow and began to talk, while the girls went into the cabin to prepare the evening meal.

"Judith and Hetty," Deerslayer called after a while, "here's comforting news for you; the Delaware tells me that he has been watching the enemy for hours. He has seen your father and Hurry Harry, and neither is in suffering. Of course, they are kept in camp; otherwise, they do as they please."

"I rejoice to hear this, Deerslayer," returned Judith, "and I think we shall find a chance to ransom them."

"Would the savages let father go if Judith and I gave them all our best things?" asked Hetty.

"Their women might interfere with such an end in view; but tell me, Serpent, are there many women in the camp?"

"Six," answered the Delaware, holding up all the fingers of one hand and the thumb of the other hand, "besides Wah-ta-Wah."

"Did you see her, chief?" asked Deerslayer.

"No, Deerslayer, Chingachgook heard the laugh of Wah-ta-Wah; he knew it from the laugh of the women of the Iroquois. It sounds like the chirp of the wren."

By this time it had become quite dark, the sky was clouded, and the stars hidden. A light breeze arose from the south. Deerslayer lifted the grapnel, and the scow began to drift toward the north. Chingachgook, Judith, and Deerslayer seated themselves in the stern of the scow and began to talk and form plans of setting Hurry and Tom free from the Indians. In this manner half an hour passed, during which time the ark had been slowly stealing over the water, the darkness thickening around it.

"It is a gloomy night," said Judith; "I hope we shall be able to find the castle. Do you hear anything, Deerslayer? It seems as if the water were stirring quite near us."

"Something did move," answered Deerslayer; "it must have been a fish. Ha! that sounds like a paddle."

At this moment the Delaware leaned forward and pointed into the gloom. His companions followed the direction of his gesture, and to their eyes appeared a canoe with a single person standing erect, paddling.

How many lay concealed in the bottom of the canoe could not be known, of course. Deerslayer seized his rifle.

"I can easily bring down the paddler," he whispered; "but first we'll hail him and ask him his errand. Hold!" he cried aloud; "if you come nearer, I must fire. Stop paddling and answer!"

"Fire, and slay a poor defenseless girl," returned a girl's voice, "and God will never forgive you! Go your way, Deerslayer, and let me go mine."

"Hetty!" exclaimed the young man and Judith, in a breath, and the former sprang instantly to the spot where he had left the canoe they had been towing. It was gone, and he understood the whole affair. Poor feeble-minded Hetty was bent on some mad scheme to save her father and Hurry. She had slipped away while they were talking and embarked in the canoe, which in all likelihood would now come into the possession of the Iroquois.

CHAPTER VI

THE ADVENTURES OF HETTY

The ark moved slowly away westward, and there lay for an hour near the land. Deerslayer and Chingachgook thought that Hetty would make the best of her way to that spot as soon as she considered herself free from danger of pursuit.

Although Hetty was feeble-minded, she was cunning enough to know that she must keep the canoe from the hands of the Iroquois. With cautious strokes she made toward the western shore and landed on a gravelly point under a hanging oak. It was her intention to shove the canoe off into the water where it would probably drift toward the castle, or where Deerslayer would have the chance of regaining it in the morning. She was about to do this when she recognized the voice of Judith, and then understood that the ark was approaching from the south. Here was all she could desire, for while the occupants of the ark could easily recapture the canoe, flight was perfectly easy, as twenty steps would bury her in the forest.

Deerslayer was standing in the bow with Judith near him, and the Delaware was at the helm.

"Chief," said Deerslayer, speaking in English so that Judith might understand, "there's a canoe."

Judith knew that the boat must be the one in which her sister had fled. It was seized immediately and fastened to the side of the ark. The sail was lowered and the motion of the ark arrested.

"Hetty," called Judith, through the darkness, "are you within hearing, dear sister? Answer! Let me hear the sound of your voice, Hetty, dear Hetty!"

"I'm here, Judith — here on the shore. It will be useless to follow me, as I will hide in the woods."

"Oh, Hetty! Remember it is near midnight and the woods are filled with savages and wild beasts," pleaded Judith, with tears.

"Neither will harm a poor half-witted girl, Judith. I am going to help my father and Hurry Harry," answered Hetty.

"We all care for them, and intend to-morrow to send them a flag of truce to buy their ransom. Come back, dear sister! Trust to us. We will do all we can for father. You can do nothing in the dark; you will lose your way in the forest and perish for want of food," cried Judith.

"God will not let that happen to a poor child that goes only to serve her father. I must try and find the savages," said Hetty, calmly; and when Judith next called there was no answer. By the snapping of dry twigs and the rustling of the leaves she knew that Hetty was already in the woods.

There was nothing left to do but to set sail for the castle, where all was found as it had been left. Judith occupied a solitary bed that night, and wet her pillow with many tears, as she thought of her gentle sister alone in the dark forest. Deerslayer and the Delaware took their rest in the ark.

When Hetty left the shore, she took a direction that was nearly a matter of chance after the first few yards. The night was so intensely dark that her progress was slow. For two hours did this simple-minded girl toil through the forest. Her feet often slid from beneath her and she got many falls, though none to do her injury. At last she became so weary that rest was necessary. She gathered a bed of leaves and, kneeling beside the humble pile, repeated her prayers. She lay down and dropped asleep in a few minutes.

It may seem strange to you that Hetty was not more afraid. But you must remember that besides being simple-minded, she had always been taught that in

these regions there were no wild beasts that would harm her, and there were no dangerous serpents; and she felt no fear of the savages, because she knew that they would respect a feeble-minded girl.

In the early morning, as she was awakening, her hand fell on some object that was warm and soft. The next moment a rude attack was made on her side, as if a rooting animal were thrusting its snout against her with a desire to force her position. As the startled girl arose to a sitting attitude, something dark sprang from her, scattering the leaves and snapping the twigs in its haste. Then she saw that it was a cub of the common American brown bear, balancing itself on its hinder legs and looking toward her. Hetty, who had owned several of these creatures, was about to run and seize the little animal, but a loud growl warned her of danger.

At no great distance behind her was the mother watching with fiery eyes. A hollow tree, once the home of bees, had fallen; the mother and two other cubs were feasting on the dainty food that had thus been placed in their reach. Hetty was not afraid; yet she did not think it wise to stay, and proceeded on her journey.

To her surprise the family of bears arose and followed

her, watching every movement. In this manner, escorted by mother and cubs, the girl went nearly a mile. When she reached a brook she washed her face and hands, and then drinking of the pure mountain water, went on her way refreshed. Her course soon led her to a plain stretched between the hills. Hetty knew that she was nearing an encampment, and had she not known, the bears would have given her warning. Sniffing the air, the mother refused to follow, although Hetty called and invited her to come.

While she was thus making her way through the bushes and beckoning and calling the bears, suddenly a hand was laid on her shoulder.

"Where go?" said a girl's soft voice. "Indian — red man — savage — wicked warrior — that-a-way."

Hetty was not frightened, for the girl did not look much older than she, and was as little likely to excite terror as any who ever appeared in the guise of an Indian. She was dressed in a calico mantle and a short skirt of blue cloth edged with gold lace. She had leggings of the same and moccasins of deerskin. Her hair fell in long dark braids down her shoulders and was parted above a low, broad forehead. Her voice was soft, so soft that she went by the name of Wah-ta-Wah, which in our language means Hist-oh-Hist.

This was the maiden whom Chingachgook was seeking. She was permitted to wander around the encampment of her captors, for they could easily have followed her trail if she had fled.

You must remember that the Iroquois did not know that Chingachgook was in these regions. Indeed, Wah-ta-Wah did not know it herself. When a child she had lived near the English forts, so she knew a little of the English tongue.

"Where go?" repeated she, smiling sweetly at Hetty.

"What is your name?" asked the latter.

"Wah-ta-Wah. I no Mingo — good Delaware. Come here where no eyes."

Wah-ta-Wah led her companion under some overhanging trees and bushes, and they both sat down on a fallen log.

Hetty told her story: how she wished to rescue her father, and how Chingachgook was with them on the ark. Wah-ta-Wah or Hist (as we shall call her) heard this with delight. She knew now that she would be rescued. In a little while, after more talk on Hetty's part, Hist understood that her companion was not as clever or bright as other girls of that age usually are. The Indian girl knew that the Iroquois would not harm her, because they would

think that the Great Spirit had taken away her reason. In fact, they paid to those who were so afflicted all sorts of honors and respect from a kind of religious reverence.

Hist, therefore, with no uneasiness, took her newly found friend to the camp, first cautioning her particularly against mentioning Chingachgook's presence. Hetty promised not to speak of him in any way.

The encampment was temporary; that is, the Indians did not intend to stay long in this one place. A fire had been built against the roots of a live oak for cooking. Scattered around this center were fifteen or twenty huts made of branches of trees and topped with bark that had been stripped from the fallen trees. They had no furniture. Cooking utensils were lying near the fire; a few articles of clothing were to be seen in and around the huts; rifles, horns, and pouches leaned against or hung suspended from the trees; and the carcasses of two or three deer were stretched out to view. This encampment was in the midst of a deep wood. There was no open area, but all was dark and cunning. A few children strayed from hut to hut; the laughter and low voices of women occasionally broke in on the deep stillness. As for the men, they ate, slept, or examined their arms.

As the two girls drew near, Hetty caught sight of

her father. He was seated on the ground with his back to a tree, and Hurry stood near him whittling a twig. They seemed to be as much at liberty as if they were visitors in the camp instead of prisoners.

Hetty merely walked to her father's side without speaking. The old man was silent also. He knew that there was no more certain way of winning the Indians' respect than by imitating their self-command. A few warriors collected and looked at Hetty, but the North American Indian prided himself on uttering no expressions of alarm, surprise, or joy. They were always dignified and grave in times of peace. Hist soon told the chief of the tribe and her other captors all about Hetty, her feeble-mindedness, and why she had come to the encampment. This was enough to make even the fiercest treat the girl with respect and tenderness. Then the Indian maiden set to work to prepare food and a lodging among the women for her new friend.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHEST AND THE RANSOM

In the castle on the lake there was an old chest that Floating Tom would never allow the girls to open. Now Deerslayer and Judith thought that it might contain articles of clothing or firearms with which they could ransom the prisoners. Indians are very easily pleased with fine clothes and gay and gaudy ribbons.

The wood of the chest was dark and rich and had once been highly polished, but it now had no gloss left, and was scratched and discolored. The corners were bound with steel, and it had three locks.

"Did you never see the chest opened, Judith?" asked Deerslayer.

"Never; father has never opened it in my presence. No one here, to my knowledge, has ever seen the lid raised."

The key must be found, however, before they could open the chest. They searched through all the rooms of the castle, and at last found it in a pocket of one of Hetty's dresses hanging on the wall. Tom had prob-

ably thought Hetty too simple-minded to put it to use. All three padlocks were easily opened by this single key. The lid was too heavy for Judith to raise, so Deerslayer applied his strength to it and soon had it propped against the timbers of the house.

The first articles that came to view were some scarlet coats embroidered with gold. Chingachgook, hitherto so silent, uttered an exclamation of pleasure. "Hugh!" he said. One gay garment was too much for his dignity. He tried it on and thought of Hist as he regarded himself in the single little mirror which the castle boasted. "Hugh!" he said again.

Next came to view a beautiful brocade dress of delicate tints and rare tissue. Judith gave a cry of delight and must adorn herself with the gown before they looked further among the chest's contents. Then came a pair of pistols curiously inlaid with silver; then some sea instruments.

Deerslayer now discovered a small bag. He opened it and took out one by one the pieces of a set of chessmen. They were of ivory and exquisitely carved; the knights were mounted; the castles stood on elephants, and even the pawns possessed the heads and busts of men. Chingachgook fairly forgot his Indian dignity. He took up each piece and pointed out the

workmanship, but the elephants gave him the greatest pleasure.

"Hugh! Hugh!" he said, as he passed his fingers over their trunks. At once they decided to offer the castles on elephants to the Indians in exchange for Hutter and Hurry.

They packed all, except these, back into the chest and locked the three padlocks. Then the two men and the girl consulted as to the best way of setting to work. While they were talking a light step was heard on the platform, a human figure darkened the doorway, and Hetty stood before them!

When an Indian youth of about sixteen or seventeen years of age appeared at her side, Judith gave a cry of alarm. Their feet were moccasined so that their entrance had been made almost without noise. Deerslayer's first measure was to speak rapidly in Delaware to his friend, cautioning him to keep out of sight, while he stood on guard; the second was to step to the door. No one else, however, had come: a raft that lay floating at the side of the ark at once explained how Hetty had arrived. Two dead and dry logs of pine, consequently buoyant, were bound together, and a little platform of split chestnut placed on their surfaces. The young Iroquois had rowed Hetty to the castle.

Of course Judith welcomed her sister with much joy, and the latter told the story of her adventures. Deerslayer questioned her closely and found that the Indians had sent her back for canoes, and that probably the shores were filled with the savages waiting to see what result their gentle messenger would bring about.

Deerslayer told the sisters to go to their own room, and then procuring the ivory pieces, he beckoned to the young Iroquois. The white man knew enough of the Iroquois language to hold a conversation, but first he let the lad gaze in admiration at the pieces.

"Now you know, lad, that the old man of your prisoners is the father of these two girls. They naturally wish to save him and the other, too. They will give these two ivory creatures as ransom. Go back and tell this to your chiefs, and bring me the answer before sunset."

The boy asked for a canoe that he might be gone a shorter while; he also wanted to take one of the elephants with him. Deerslayer quietly refused, and the boy rowed slowly away, while the young hunter watched, him as long as he remained in sight.

In the meanwhile, Hetty was telling Chingachgook all about Hist in the next room.

"Hist told me to tell you," said Hetty, "that you

must not trust the Iroquois in anything. Then she said that there is a large bright star that comes over the hill about half an hour after dark; and just as that star comes in sight, she will be on the point where I landed last night, and that you must come for her in a canoe."

"Good! Chingachgook understands well enough," answered that warrior.

Then Hetty told how Hist had been on the raft with her until it left the shore and was now somewhere in the woods, and she hoped to be able at night to slip away from her captors and conceal herself on the point. No one appeared to suspect that Chingachgook was present.

Deerslayer's voice was heard calling to his friend, and Hetty went back to her sister. Both men were confident that if the ransom idea failed, there would surely be an assault made that night. The enemy knew now that the castle contained a treasure. It would be difficult to prevent them from getting possession of the canoes and ark, for it was easy to collect logs on the shore and make rafts of almost any size. The two finally decided that the best thing to do would be to take refuge in the ark.

All four immediately set to work to make prepara-

tions. They removed the ammunition, beds, cooking utensils, and the mysterious chest from the castle into the ark. This took about two or three hours. At the end of that time the raft made its appearance, moving from the shore.

They could see two warriors on it, who appeared to be unarmed. Everything was made ready to receive the two dangerous guests long before they were near enough to be hailed. The Serpent and the girls retired into the building, where the former stood near the door, well provided with rifles. Deerslayer brought a stool to the edge of the platform and sat with his rifle leaning carelessly against him.

When the raft was within fifty feet, he hailed the warriors, it not being his intention to let them land.

"I am Deerslayer," said he, in Iroquois language.

"My name is Rivenoak," said the elder of the two. "It is a name to make a Delaware turn pale. My brother has sent a message to the Iroquois, and it has made their hearts very glad. They hear he has images of beasts with two tails. Will he show them to his friends?"

"Here is one," said Deerslayer, and he tossed an elephant to the raft. "If it is not returned, the rifle will settle the point between us."

The two grim warriors showed even more delight than the boy. You must understand that they had, of course, never seen an elephant nor the likeness of one. The more they studied the image, the greater was their astonishment.

"Has my paleface brother any more such beasts?"

"There are more; but one must be enough to buy off the prisoners," answered Deerslayer.

After talking and bargaining for a long while, Rivenoak refused to let his prisoners go for one or even two images. He prepared to depart, leaving Deerslayer outwardly calm but inwardly mortified and filled with regret.

It took but a little while for the Indians to start their raft in motion. Rivenoak walked over the logs, brushing aside the hemlock branches that served as a seat for the rowers. He cast ferocious looks at the platform and castle. Judith was watching from the loophole.

"Be on your guard, Deerslayer!" she cried. "I see rifles beneath the brush! The Iroquois is loosening them with his feet."

The Indian understood. He smiled and told his companion not to put the logs in motion yet, then advanced to the end of the raft nearest the platform.

"Why should Rivenoak and his brother have any cloud between them?" he said. "One beast shall be the price of one prisoner."

Deerslayer was delighted, and he determined to be generous, too. "Keep the beast," he said, "that you had forgotten to give back to me as you were about to start. Show it to your people. When you bring us our friends, two more shall be added to it, and we may find a fourth to make an even number."

This settled the matter, and the two smiling graciously and sweetly departed for shore.

"Can any faith be put in such wretches?" asked Judith, when she and Hetty had come out on the platform. "Will they not keep the toy they have and refuse to bring back my father?"

"I'm no judge of a redskin, Judith, if that two-tailed beast doesn't set the whole tribe in some such stir as a stick raises in a beehive. There will be no peace among them until they think they have gotten possession of everything like that bit of carved bone that Thomas Hutter owns."

The spirits of all in the castle were raised, for it seemed now as if they were going to be successful. The sun was once more sinking in the west when two logs were again seen approaching the castle, and Judith saw

her father and Hurry bound, lying in the center of the raft. As before, the Indians were rowing.

"You are welcome to your old abode, Master Hutter," said Deerslayer, as he helped the old man upon the platform after his legs had been released. As the young hunter did this, he passed into Rivenoak's hands the other elephant.

Hurry, too, had just been unbound. So tightly had the thongs been drawn that for a while he could not regain the use of his limbs, and there the young giant stood, a helpless and yet a ludicrous object. Deerslayer broke into a hearty laugh.

"You look like a pine in a clearing, Hurry. I'm glad to see that you haven't had your hair dressed by the Iroquois barbers in your late visit to the camp," said he.

"Don't act like a laughing girl in a country school," growled Hurry. "Just tell me whether there are any feet or not at the end of these legs of mine."

"You've come off whole, Hurry, and that's not a little," answered Deerslayer, and he passed the remainder of the promised ransom to Rivenoak. At the same time he motioned to him to depart quickly. He obeyed, and the raft was soon a hundred yards from the castle. Deerslayer did not know what Hutter and Hurry in their

anger might do to the departing savages, and he knew how unwise it would be to provoke bloodshed and warfare now.

It took half an hour for the two to restore circulation and regain the use of their limbs. Then while Judith and Hetty prepared supper, Deerslayer told them all that had happened.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RESCUE

"I WONDER if it is to be peace or war between us and the savages!" exclaimed Hurry, as they sat at supper. They were all happy at being together, and of course their conversation naturally turned to their foes.

Deerslayer had gone outside for an instant, and as Hurry ceased speaking, he entered and threw on the table a fagot composed of a dozen sticks bound tightly together with a deerskin thong. The end had been dipped in blood!

"There's an answer to your question, Hurry," said he. "I found it in Floating Tom's dooryard not a minute ago."

"If this isn't plain English, it is plain Indian. Here's what they call a declaration of war," said Hurry. "But how did it come there?"

"The savages may have left the scalp on your head, Hurry, but they must have taken off the ears, or else you would have heard the stirring of the water made by the Indian lad as he came off again on his two logs. His errand was to throw these sticks at our door."

"Where's my rifle, Judith? I will follow and send back an answer to the vagabonds through their messenger!"

"Not while I stand by!" said Deerslayer. "Faith is faith whether given to a redskin or a Christian. The lad lighted a pine knot and came here fairly under its blaze to give us this warning and no man here should harm him while employed on such an errand."

Hurry paid no attention to this speech, but hastened to the spot where the canoe was fastened. Deerslayer spoke quickly to the Serpent, who stood on guard watching the lad to see that no treachery was intended. As Deerslayer called, he stepped into the canoe and quietly removed the paddles. In the meanwhile the Indian lad had disappeared into the darkness. Hurry was furious and approached the Delaware with threats and menaces. He shook his fists and flourished his arms so that even Deerslayer was alarmed; but the Indian chief calmly watched him and showed no sign of fear or shrinking. Hurry was awed by such stern composure and fell back to vent his rage on Deerslayer.

"Deerslayer," said he, "you have been untrue to your friends in letting such a chance slip through your fingers, as well as to yourself."

"I should have been untrue to the right if I had done

otherwise," returned Deerslayer, steadily. "The lad came on lawful business, and the meanest redskin that roams the woods would be ashamed of not respecting his errand." So saying, Deerslayer turned away.

Everything was now made ready for embarking in the ark. The castle was secured; the canoes withdrawn from the dock and fastened to the ark; and the fire extinguished. In the darkness of the night they set out. They knew that to stay in the castle over night was dangerous.

Hurry and Hutter lay down to make up the sleep they had lost during captivity, and the ark was left to the charge of Deerslayer, the Delaware, and the two girls. This suited them, for these four were all intent on the rescue of Hist, while Hurry and Hutter had little sympathy for the sorrows of an Indian girl.

At first all were calm, but as minute after minute passed away, their feelings became more and more excited. Deerslayer kept the boat as near shore as was prudent, for the double purpose of sailing within the shadows of the woods and of detecting any signs of an encampment they might pass on the shore. They were still a quarter of a mile distant from the point where Hist had promised to be, when Chingachgook came silently to the side of his friend and pointed directly ahead. A small fire was glimmering on the southern

side of the point, leaving no doubt but that the Iroquois had suddenly moved their camp to the very spot that Hist had appointed as a meeting place.

The two men consulted. They decided to let Hutter and Hurry sleep on, to anchor and leave Judith in charge of the scow, and to embark in a canoe for the shore. The intense darkness served as a screen, and there was little danger of the ark being detected.

"The star has not yet risen, it is true," said Deerslayer, as he gave his directions to Judith; "but none of us are likely to be any the wiser on account of the clouds. However, Hist has a ready mind, and she is one of those that doesn't always need to have a thing before her to see it."

Chingachgook and his paleface friend set forth on their dangerous enterprise with a coolness that would have done credit to men who were on their twentieth instead of their first warpath.

The paddles were lifted and returned to the water noiselessly, and when within one hundred yards of the beach, Chingachgook took his in altogether. As they came still more within the belt of darkness that girded the woods, it was seen that they were steering too far north; they altered their course. At last the bow of the boat grated on the gravel of the beach.

Chingachgook stepped upon the shore and cautiously examined it. No Hist rewarded his search. When he returned, he found that his friend had also landed. They talked in whispers, the Indian thinking that they must have mistaken the place. Deerslayer thought it was probable that they had mistaken the hour. While he was speaking, he grasped the Delaware's arm and pointed toward the summits of the eastern mountains. The clouds had broken a little, and the star was glittering among the branches of a pine.

The young men leaned on their rifles, listening intently for the sound of approaching footsteps. Voices they often heard and mingled with them the cries of children and the low, sweet laughter of Indian women. They knew that they must be very near the encampment. A quarter of an hour was passed in this state of intense anxiety; Deerslayer then offered to circle the point in the canoe and try to get a position closer to the camp. Chingachgook agreed, and the two separated.

As soon as Deerslayer was in the canoe, he left shore with the utmost precaution. The most practiced foot might stir a bunch of leaves, or snap a dry stick in the dark, but a bark canoe could be made to float over the surface of the water with the noiseless move-

ments of an aquatic bird. A glimpse of the fire came upon him suddenly and a little unexpectedly, but as he was safe from detection, he stopped the canoe in the most favorable position he could find, and commenced his observations.

A large fire had been made for the purpose of light and cooking. At this moment a supply of dried brush had been placed upon it. Immediately it blazed high so that Deerslayer could see the whole encampment. He saw at a glance that many of the warriors were absent. His acquaintance, Rivenoak, however, was seated in the foreground showing another of the tribe one of the elephants. A boy was looking over his shoulder. In the background eight or ten warriors lay or sat with their backs against trees, their arms near them. All the young women were collected in one place, and all seemed to be light-hearted enough, save one squaw who was seated apart. She had a watchful, soured look.

Deerslayer, of course, looked anxiously and eagerly for Hist. She was nowhere visible. At length the old squaw spoke angrily to some one behind her, and Hist came from the background of trees. Deerslayer now understood that Hist was watched by the old woman. The chief of the tribe had put this squaw

over the Delaware girl to spy on her movements. The young hunter could see how uneasy Hist was. She looked up once or twice to get glimpses of the star she had named as a sign for their meeting. All was in vain, however; the squaw kept a watchful eye on her.

Deerslayer did not know what to do. He returned to Chingachgook and told him of the state of affairs. Leaving the canoe in such a position that Hist must see it should she come to the place of meeting before they returned, the young men looked to their arms and prepared to enter the wood. They moved with exceeding caution and trailed their rifles, both to keep the barrels out of view and in readiness for service. In a short time they reached a little summit overlooking the fire; here they placed their bodies against the trunk of an oak.

The women were still laughing and talking, and thirteen warriors were now admiring the elephant.

The Delaware caused his friend to stoop so as to completely conceal himself, and then he made the noise of the chirp and chatter of the little American squirrel so perfectly that Deerslayer actually thought it came from one of the little animals skipping about over his head.

None of the Iroquois paid it the least attention, but

(*Facing page 71*)

"Serpent put his arm around Hist."

Hist stopped talking and sat motionless. Chingachgook knew his presence was known to her. He chirruped again, that the exact spot where he was standing might be known.

The moment was near when it became necessary for Hist to act. Luckily at this moment one of the warriors bade the old woman bring him water to drink. Taking a gourd from a branch and summoning Hist to her side, she moved to the north of the point, where there was a delicious spring. In walking Hist was held tightly by the hand. As they passed the oak, the chirrup was repeated. The old woman expressed her surprise that a squirrel should be out at so late an hour. Hist said she supposed it was waiting to get some crumbs from the late supper. The gourd was filled and the squaw was hurrying back, when she was suddenly seized and a hand placed over her mouth to prevent her from screaming. The Serpent put his arm around Hist and dashed through the bushes with her toward the canoe, leaving his friend to take care of the squaw.

The camp was soon alarmed, and several warriors appeared. It was time for Deerslayer to retreat. With his rifle poised and his head over his shoulders, he ran for the bushes like a lion at bay.

CHAPTER IX

THE CAPTURE OF DEERSLAYER

To gain the beach and to follow it around to the place where Chingachgook was already in the canoe with Hist and anxiously awaiting his appearance, occupied but a moment. Laying his rifle in the bottom of the boat, Deerslayer stooped to give the latter a vigorous push from the shore, when a powerful Indian leaped through the bushes, alighting like a panther on the hunter's back. A false step would ruin all. Instead of trying to save himself, Deerslayer threw all his force into a desperate effort and shoved the canoe off with a power that sent it a hundred feet from the shore and then fell forward into the lake himself, face downward. His assailant, of course, followed him.

The water was not more than breast high. Deerslayer's hands were free, and the savage was compelled to relinquish his hug to keep his own face above the water. For half a minute there was a desperate struggle, then both stood erect grasping each other's arms. In another instant a half-dozen savages came leaping

into the water to aid their friend, and Deerslayer yielded himself as a prisoner.

To quit the lake and lead their captive to the fire did not take the Indians long. So much engaged were they with all the struggle that the canoe was unseen, although it lay so near that the Delaware and Hist could hear every word uttered. No sooner was his friend led into the bushes than the Delaware placed his paddle in the water, and the canoe glided noiselessly away toward the ark.

When Deerslayer reached the fire, he found himself surrounded by no less than eight grim warriors, one of whom was his old friend, Rivenoak. His arms were not pinioned, and he was left the free use of his hands, his knife having first been removed. A strong rope of bark was passed from ankle to ankle, not so much to prevent his walking as to prevent his escape by taking any sudden leap. He was permitted to seat himself on the end of a log near the fire to dry his clothes. The warriors consulted near at hand. All those who had been out returned to report that no signs of any other prowlers near the camp were to be found.

Rivenoak quietly took a seat on the log beside his prisoner.

"My paleface friend is very welcome," said he, in

his own language, with a familiar nod and smile. "The Iroquois keep a hot fire to dry the white man's clothes."

"I thank you, Iroquois or Mingo," returned Deerslayer. "I thank you for the welcome and I thank you for the fire. Each is good in its way, and the last is very good when one has been in a spring as cold as the Glimmerglass."

"What sign or signal told the young maiden that the Delaware was nigh?" asked the Iroquois, with more curiosity than it was usual for him to betray.

Deerslayer laughed as heartily as if he were not a captive and in danger of torture or death.

"Your squirrels," said he, "are great gadabouts. When other folks' squirrels are at home and asleep, yours keep in motion among the trees and chirrup and sing in a way that even a Delaware girl can understand their music. There are four-legged squirrels and two-legged squirrels."

The warrior looked vexed, but he suppressed any anger he might feel, and soon left his captive and joined the rest of his tribe. Here he told what he had learned. Admiration was mingled with anger at the boldness and success of their enemies. Three or four of them ascended the little summit and gazed at the tree where

it was understood the two had posted themselves, and one even examined the footprints around the roots to make sure that the statement was true.

"The Hurons know that they have a great warrior for a prisoner and they will treat him as one. If he is to be tortured, his torments shall be such as no common man can bear; if he is to be treated as a friend, it will be the friendship of chiefs," said one to our hero.

Deerslayer felt his blood chill at the announcement, even while he maintained an aspect so stern that even his quick-sighted enemy could discover in it no signs of weakness.

"God has put me in your hands, Mingo," he at length answered, "and I suppose you will act your will on me — "

He ceased, for like a sort of specter that came before him and put a stop to his words was Hetty Hutter standing at the side of the fire as quietly as if she belonged to the tribe.

"Judith told me to come this time, Deerslayer," said she. "She paddled me ashore in a canoe herself as soon as the Serpent and Hist arrived. She bade me come and see you and to try and persuade the savages to take more elephants to let you off."

"Rivenoak has left us, I see," said Deerslayer, in

a low voice, "and joined the other warriors. He is telling them to watch your movements; to find where the canoe is to meet you to take you back to the ark. They will seize it, and have the ark and castle at their mercy."

"You may trust me to outwit the best Indian of them all," returned the girl. "I know I am feeble-minded, but I've got some sense."

"Poor little Hetty! I'm afraid all that's easier said than done. If you get back to the ark, tell them to keep close and to keep moving, too, especially at night. Many hours cannot go by without the troops on the river hearing of this party; then your friends may look for relief. It is but a day's march from the nearest garrison, and true soldiers will never be idle with the foe in the neighborhood. Tell Judith to feel no concern on my account."

Deerslayer now asked her to leave him, as the warriors were approaching. Hetty walked toward the women with as much confidence as if she were a member of the tribe. She was given a skin and made her own bed on a pile of boughs and was soon asleep like all around her.

The young men who had been sent out to reconnoiter on the sudden appearance of Hetty soon re-

turned to report that they had made no discovery. There were now thirteen men in the party, and three kept watch at a time. One remained in the shadow not far from the fire. His duty was to guard the captive and to take care of the fire. Another passed from one beach to the other, while the third kept moving slowly around on the outer extremity of the strand. Rivenoak was aware that in holding Deerslayer he had in his own hands the most dangerous of all his enemies.

At midnight Hetty awoke, and leaving her bed of skins and boughs, found her way to the beach. She took no pains to conceal her movements. The sentinel saw her disappearing without changing his position, for he knew that others were on the lookout, and he did not believe that one who had come twice into the camp of her own free will would take refuge in flight. In this way she reached the place where the canoe had come ashore, and there she was completely hidden from sight by bushes and underbrush.

A canoe appeared noiselessly and soon grated on the beach. Hetty jumped in and in a few moments was a hundred yards from the shore. Judith sat alone in the stern.

"Here we are safe, Hetty," she said, "and may talk without the fear of being overheard. You must speak

low, however, for sounds are heard far on the water on a still night. What message did Deerslayer send?"

Hetty told her sister in her gentle way all that had passed. Judith was terrified at the idea that Deerslayer might be tortured. She knew that the Iroquois would not be content to accept such baubles as chessmen in exchange for a man like Deerslayer.

When she could think of no more questions to ask, they paddled toward the scow. But no boat was to be seen. Several times they fancied that they saw it looming up in the dark, but on each occasion they were mistaken. After a search that lasted half an hour, the girls were forced to believe that the ark had departed.

"Father has thought us in our cabin asleep, Judith, and he has moved away to go home," said Hetty.

"That is true," replied her sister. "They have gone up the lake."

A stillness and darkness as complete as if the silence of the forest had never been disturbed or the sun had never shone on that region now reigned on the slumbering woods, the gloomy water, and even the murky sky. The girls let their canoe drift toward the north and waited for the day with feelings of loneliness and terror.

CHAPTER X

THE ATTACK ON THE CASTLE

While Hist slept on her pallet, and Chingachgook on his in the forward part of the ark, Hurry and Hutter steered the boat for the castle. They had discovered that the girls and the canoe were missing, but they thought that Judith would make for the castle as a meeting place. When morning had fully come, Hutter got his glass and took a long and anxious survey. The canoe was seen and in it Judith and Hetty. It had passed the scow in the night and was now floating in the broadest part of the lake.

Hist clapped her hands with delight and laughed with joy, but Chingachgook was silent. They were now within half a mile of the castle and were steadily advancing toward it and the girls. Chingachgook joined the two white men in the stern.

"No good to go to castle!" he said with emphasis. "Iroquois there!"

"Iroquois there!" exclaimed Hurry. "If this is true, a pretty trap are we about to pull down on our

heads; but no sign can I see of anything near or about the old hut, except logs, water, and bark."

"Stop boat!" said Hist, eagerly. "No go too near. Iroquois there!"

"It is seldom that an Indian girl meddles, and when she does, there is generally a cause for it," interrupted Hutter, and he took the glass. "Truly there is a moccasin floating against one of the piles, and it may or may not be a sign that the castle hasn't escaped visitors in our absence."

There were many modes, however, of accounting for the presence of the moccasin without supposing it to have been dropped by an enemy. It might have fallen from the platform even while Hutter was in possession of the place and drifted to the spot where it was now seen. It might have drifted from a distance up or down the lake. It might have been thrown from a window of the ark.

The Delaware offered to take a canoe and go to the palisade to bring away the moccasin, when its ornaments would show whether it came from the Iroquois or not.

"Let red man go — better eyes than paleface. Know Indian tricks better, too."

"Use your paddle, Serpent, and welcome," said Hurry.

Chingachgook was already in the canoe, before Hurry stopped talking. He paddled steadily toward the palisade, keeping his eye on the different loops of the building. Each instant he expected to see the muzzle of a rifle protruded or to hear its sharp crack. Instead of picking up the moccasin, he made a circuit of the whole building, examining everything. Not a fastening was displaced, not a window had been broken. The door looked as secure as it did when closed by Hutter, and even the gate of the dock had all its customary fastenings.

As he approached the moccasin, he threw it into his canoe by a movement of his paddle. He was now ready to depart. Retreat was even more dangerous than approach, but the Indian paddled deliberately away, taking the direction of the ark. No nervousness quickened the motions of his arms or induced him even to glance behind him.

"Well, Serpent," cried Hurry, "what news from the Muskrat?"

"I no like it," returned the Delaware. "Too still."

"If you have no better reason than that, old Tom had better hoist his sail and go and get breakfast under his own roof. What has become of the moccasin?"

"Here!" returned Chingachgook, holding it up.

The moccasin was examined, and Hist pronounced it to be Iroquois by the manner in which the porcupine quills were arranged on the front, but from this it did not follow that its owners were in the castle. Hutter and Hurry were not men to be hindered long from proceeding by a proof as slight as that of the moccasin. They hoisted the sail again, and the ark was soon in motion, heading toward the castle.

Hurry was soon on the platform, stamping his feet, and shaking the door and acting altogether in a senseless manner, as if to proclaim his indifference to the whole Iroquois tribe. Hutter, in the meanwhile, was in the canoe trying to open the gate. You must remember that this gate opened into the dock under the house.

Chingachgook was in charge of the ark, which was separated from the castle some ten or twelve feet by means of the piles. The top of these formed a kind of breastwork that rose to the height of a man's head and covered the parts of the scow that were not protected by the cabin.

Hutter found all fast under the castle. The key was produced, the locks removed, the chain loosened, and the trapdoor pushed upward. Hurry thrust his head in at the opening, and soon his heavy feet were

heard stamping in the passage above. He gave a shout of triumph.

"Come on, Tom!" he called. "I'll open the front door!"

A moment of silence succeeded, and a noise like that made by the fall of a heavy body followed. A deep cry from Hurry, and then the whole interior of the building seemed alive! The noises could not be mistaken. They sounded like those that would be produced by a struggle between tigers in a cage. Once or twice the Indian yell was given, but it seemed smothered. It appeared as if bodies were constantly thrown upon the floor, as often rising again to renew the struggle.

Chingachgook did not know what to do. He had all the arms in the ark, Hutter and Hurry having proceeded without rifles, but there was no way of using them or of passing them into the hands of their owners. The combatants were literally caged. It was as impossible to get out of the building as to get into it.

Chingachgook told Hist to take the canoe and join Judith and Hetty, who were coming nearer and nearer, and warn them, but she would not obey. Since he could not help his friends, he cut the line and shoved

the scow some twenty feet clear of the piles, then used the oars. When he stopped rowing, he was about one hundred yards from the castle. Judith and Hetty had now discovered that something was wrong and had stopped paddling. They were about one thousand feet farther north.

All this while the struggle continued within the house. Suddenly the door flew open, and the fight was transferred to the platform, the light, and the open air. An Iroquois had unfastened the door, and three or four of his tribe rushed after him upon the narrow space, as if glad to escape. The body of another followed, pitched headlong through the door. Then came Hurry raging like a lion and for an instant freed. Hutter was already a captive and bound.

This is the way the Indians had gained possession of the castle. As soon as it was dark the night before, rafts approached from both shores to reconnoiter. The ark had passed within fifty feet of one of them without discovering it; the men it held lying at their length on the logs so as to blend themselves and their slow-moving machine with the water. When they reached the castle and, as had been expected, found it empty, the rafts were sent back for more men. The two that remained succeeded in getting on the roof.

By removing some of the bark they entered the garret. Hatchets now opened a hole through the square logs of the upper floor; and the Indians, one by one, dropped into the room beneath.

The night was passed in sleep, and through the loops in the morning they could see the approach of the ark. Ropes of bark were prepared. They took their stations in the three different rooms, and all awaited the signal. As soon as the Indians had entered, men from without replaced the bark of the roof and departed for shore. It was one of these who had dropped his moccasin and who had been unable to find it in the dark.

Hurry now seized the nearest Iroquois by the waist and hurled him into the water as if he had been a child. In half a minute two more were at his side. Hurry believed himself to be fully able to cope with the remainder of the redskins.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "The rascals are taking to the lake, and I'll soon have them all swimming!"

As he said this, one of the largest and strongest of the Hurons grasped Hurry. Then followed a struggle which lasted until the white man had thrown the redskin down, himself on top. At this instant a rope of bark was passed within Hurry's two arms, and his

elbows were drawn behind his back. Even his gigantic strength could not resist this. Almost at the same time a fastening secured his ankles, and he was rolled to the center of the platform as rudely as if he were a log of wood. The tables had been turned, and the white man lay there helpless and bound.

Chingachgook and Hist saw all this struggle from the ark. When the Delaware had secured his rifle, it was too late; Hurry and Hutter were bound. The girls' canoe by this time was drifting a little nearer the castle, and both were standing erect to see what had happened. The most important thing to do was to get the two in the shelter of the ark. Hist made signs and gestures for them to approach, but they evidently did not understand and paddled slowly back to the north.

Chingachgook lost no time in hoisting a sail. He then forced Hist into the cabin with himself, and secured the doors and looked about for rifles. Unfortunately the wind brought the boat in the enemy's direction, and they found themselves within a few yards of the platform, and finally touched it.

"Run out one of the poles, Serpent," groaned Hurry, as he lay there bound, "and shove the head of the scow off. Then you'll drift clear of us."

By this time all the Iroquois had disappeared in the castle and were watching through the loops for a chance to fire.

Hist put her mouth near a loop of the cabin window in the ark and whispered to Hurry: –

"Why don't you roll here and fall in scow? Chingachgook shoot Iroquois if he chase."

The other end of the ark swung slowly around nearer and nearer to the platform. Hurry, who now lay with his face toward the scow, turned over and over like one in pain until he saw that the vessel was free and beginning to grate slowly along the sides of the piles. The attempt was desperate, but seemed the only chance of escaping torture and death. Waiting to the last moment in order that the scow might fairly rub against the platform, he began to writhe again, and then he suddenly and rapidly rolled over and over. Unfortunately his shoulders took more space to turn in than his feet, and by the time he reached the end of the platform his direction had so far changed as to carry him clear of the ark altogether, and he fell into the water.

Chingachgook fired at the building at this instant to distract the Iroquois' attention, no man of whom had seen the captive disappear. Hist watched the

white man as a cat does a mouse. As soon as he fell, she opened the cabin door, and catching the spare rope of the sail, she threw it in his direction. The line fell on his head and body, and he not only succeeded in grasping part of it with his hands, but actually got a portion of it between his teeth. Hurry was an expert swimmer, and instead of floundering and struggling, he permitted his body to sink as low as possible. The motion of the ark soon tightened the rope, and, of course, he was gently dragged ahead. Now they were moving quickly away toward the north.

As Hurry was dragged clear of the castle, he was seen by the Iroquois. They raised their hideous yell and commenced to fire. In another minute Chingachgook had drawn him past the end of the scow, and his body was shielded from the bullets. In less time than it requires to tell it, Hist and Chingachgook had brought his huge frame to the deck and cut his bonds. The instant the Iroquois lost sight of him, three of the most active ran to the trap and embarked in a canoe.

(Facing page 80)

"They began a chase after the girls."

CHAPTER XI

THE RETURN OF DEERSLAYER

The Indians had in the meanwhile caught sight of Judith and Hetty, and instead of following the ark, they immediately began a chase after the girls. Judith commenced her retreat in a southern direction. The canoes were soon in rapid motion, and for half a mile the Indians gained no advantage. A few minutes showed them that the girls were expert and that it needed all their skill to overtake them. They resorted to shifting their paddles in order to give one of their party time to breathe and rest. Judith looked behind her, and her heart sank. Soon she saw them gaining little by little, but just as one of the Iroquois was exchanging his paddle with a comrade, he broke it, and this settled the matter.

The enemy gave up the pursuit. They turned their bow toward the castle and there landed. The girls continued on their way, but after a while they saw a canoe filled with Indians departing from the castle and steering toward the shore. The girls were without food and protection, and later in the day they decided

to run the risk and seek their home. They saw that the ark, too, was heading that way.

After landing on the little platform, Hetty was the first to enter and soon returned to say that all was safe.

"I have been in all the rooms, Judith," she said, "but father's; he seems to be sleeping quietly."

Tom was indeed sleeping quietly. The savages did not wish to take him with them, and therefore had killed him in his room.

We will not stop to hear what his daughters said nor how they mourned and wept when they found that he was dead. Chingachgook and Hurry buried poor Tom in the waters of Glimmerglass, where his wife had lain for many years.

That evening Judith and Hetty took the canoe and floated away from the others in the ark to talk of their future.

"The death of our father, Hetty, has altered all our prospects," said Judith.

"No one will dispute our right to this property, Judith. We have the castle and the ark and the canoes and the woods the same as when he was living, and what can prevent us from staying here and passing the rest of our lives just as we have ever done?" answered Hetty.

"No, no, poor sister! This can no longer be. Two girls would not be safe here. Even father had as much as he could do sometimes to keep peace upon the lake, and we should fail altogether. We must leave the place and move into the settlements."

"I am sorry you think so, Judith," returned her sister. "I would rather stay here where I have passed my life. I love the trees and the mountains and the lake."

"Hurry must leave us to-night, he says," continued Judith. "As soon as it is dark, the Delaware or I will put him on shore, and then he can make the best of his way to the Mohawk and the nearest garrison, and send all the soldiers he can to our assistance; but we must first find the means to see Deerslayer. Come, the sun has set, and the ark is drifting away from us. This night I shall look in the chest, and to-morrow determine what we are to do. Let me once get Deerslayer out of the enemy's hands and he will help us!"

As the canoe moved slowly along, Judith suddenly exclaimed: —

"Is not that a canoe just passing behind the castle? Here — move in the direction of the point I mean; it is hid now, but certainly I saw a canoe stealing behind the logs."

"I've seen it for some time," Hetty quietly replied. "It was paddled by a single man; it seemed to be Deerslayer."

"Deerslayer!" returned the other. "That can't be. Deerslayer is a prisoner!"

"You can look for yourself, sister; there comes the canoe in sight again on this side of the hut."

Sure enough, the light boat had passed the building and was now steadily advancing toward the ark, the persons on board of which were already collecting in the head to receive their visitor. A single glance sufficed to assure Judith that her sister was right, and that Deerslayer was alone in the canoe. His approach was so calm and leisurely, however, as to fill her with wonder, since a man who had effected his escape from savages would not be apt to move with the steadiness and deliberation with which his paddle swept the water.

By this time the day was fairly departing, and objects were already seen dimly under the shores. In the broad lake, however, the light still lingered. The logs of the castle and ark had a sort of purple hue, blended with the growing darkness. As the two canoes approached each other, Deerslayer's sunburnt face wore a brighter look than common under the pleasing tints that seemed to dance in the air.

"Welcome, Deerslayer, welcome!" cried Judith. "Have the Iroquois become more human, and let you go, or have you escaped by your own courage and skill?"

"Neither, Judith. The Mingos are Mingos still, and will live and die Mingos. An Indian whose eyes have once been opened by a circumvention never shuts them again precisely in the same spot."

"They have killed father," interrupted Hetty, sorrowfully.

"I know it, girl; I know the whole sad story, from what I have seen from the shore and from their discourse."

"Never mind just now," said Judith. "Tell us by what means you are here."

"Oh!" said Deerslayer, "I'm out on a furlough. A furlough is when a man has leave to quit a camp or garrison for a certain specified time, at the end of which he is to come back and shoulder his musket or submit to his torments just as he may happen to be a soldier or a captive. Being the latter, I must take the chances of a prisoner."

"Have the Iroquois allowed you to leave them in this manner, without watch or guard?"

"Certain — I couldn't have come in any other manner."

"What pledge have they that you will return?"

"My word," answered the hunter, simply; "and big fools would they have been to let me come without it."

"Is it possible that you expect to go back and put yourself in their power by keeping your word?"

Deerslayer looked perplexed for a moment and then laughed.

"I didn't understand you at first, Judith; no, I didn't. You think Hurry and Chingachgook won't let me. Don't be uneasy! I shall be allowed to go back, for the Delaware would be the last man on earth to offer objections to what he knows to be his duty; and as for Hurry, he doesn't care enough about any creature but himself to spend many words on the subject."

Judith made no answer. All her feelings revolted at the cruel fate she fancied Deerslayer was drawing down upon himself, but she admired with all her heart his courage and sense of honor.

"When is your furlough out, Deerslayer?" asked she, after both canoes were heading toward the ark.

"To-morrow noon, not a minute before. I shan't quit Christian company to go and give myself up to those vagabonds an instant sooner than is downright

necessary. They begin to fear a visit from the garrison and wouldn't lengthen the time a moment. This is talking of nothing but myself and my own concerns, when you've had trouble enough and may want to consult a friend about your own matters. Is your father laid in the water, where I should think his body would like to rest?"

"It is, Deerslayer. That duty has just been performed. You are right in thinking that I wish to consult a friend, and that friend is yourself. Hurry is about to leave us. When he is gone, I hope you will give me an hour alone. Hetty and I are at a loss to know what to do."

"That's quite natural. But here's the ark, and we'll say more of this when there is a better opportunity."

The meeting between Deerslayer and his Indian friends was grave and anxious. They read in his manner that he was not a successful fugitive, and a few words let them know what is meant by the word "furlough."

It was now growing dark, and the men decided to secure the ark to the castle. They feared no attack from the Iroquois that night. As soon as the boat was properly fastened, the three girls sadly busied themselves preparing the evening meal. Hurry set about

repairing his moccasins by the light of a blazing knot; Chingachgook seated himself in gloomy thought; and Deerslayer proceeded to examine the rifle of Hutter.

This was called "Killdeer," because it was so accurate in its bore, perfect in detail, and of excellent metal. It was a little longer than usual, and was famed for its quick and accurate firing.

"This is a glorious weapon, Hurry," Deerslayer at length exclaimed; "and it may be thought a pity that it has fallen into the hands of girls. Hearken to the tick of this lock! A wolf trap hasn't a livelier spring."

"Old Tom used to give the piece a character," returned Hurry. "I have had hopes that Judith might have the idea of giving Killdeer to me."

"Well, well, it may be. But this is a lordly piece and would make a steady hand and a quick eye — the King of the Woods."

"Then keep it, Deerslayer, and become King of the Woods!" cried Judith, earnestly, who had overheard the conversation. "It can never be in better hands than it is now. I hope it will remain there fifty years."

"Judith, you can't be in earnest!" exclaimed Deer-

slayer. "Such a gift would be fit for a real king to make; yes, and for a real king to receive."

"I was never more in earnest in my life, Deerslayer."

"Well, girl, well, we'll find time to talk of this again. You mustn't be downhearted, Hurry."

Hurry growled; but he was too anxious to leave the lake and too busy in making preparations to waste breath on such a subject.

Soon after, supper was ready. It was eaten in silence and sadness, and then the whole party assembled on the platform to hear what Deerslayer had to say on the subject of his visit.

CHAPTER XII

THE MESSAGE OF THE IROQUOIS

Stools were brought from the ark and the whole six placed themselves in a circle. It was a lovely starlight night. Along the shore beneath the mountains lay the usual gloom, but in the broad lake no shadow was cast, and a thousand stars were reflected in the water, that was just stirred enough by the evening air to set them all in motion.

"Now, Deerslayer," commenced Judith, "tell us all the Iroquois have to say and the reason why they have let you go on a furlough to make us some offer."

"The simple fact is this," said Deerslayer; "when the party came back from the castle, the Iroquois held a council. No one likes to be beaten and a redskin as little as a paleface. They decided that I was to be trusted on a furlough. They fancy the lake and all that is on it lie at their mercy. Hutter is dead, and as for Hurry, they've the idea that he has been near enough to death not to wish to take another look at him this summer. Therefore they count your forces

to be reduced to Chingachgook and the three girls. As for the latter, they set them down much as they do women in general."

"You mean they despise us!" interrupted Judith, with flashing eyes.

"That will be seen. They send by me this belt of wampum to the Serpent with these words: 'Tell him that he has done well for a beginner; he may now strike across the mountains for his own villages, and no one shall look for his trail,' but Hist must go back to them. The next message is to you, Judith. A great warrior has lately lost his wife, and he will be glad to put the Wild Rose, as they call you, in her place. As for the Feeble-Mind, she will always be honored and taken care of by red warriors. Your father's goods must go to enrich the tribe. Now I have told you what they've said; but I have not told you what I think you ought to answer."

"Aye, let's hear it!" said Hurry. "My mind is settled on the point of my own answer."

"If I were you, Hurry," said Deerslayer, sternly, "I should say: 'Deerslayer, tell those scamps they don't know Hurry March. Nature won't let him desert girls of his own race in their greatest need.'"

March was embarrassed at this rebuke. There was

not enough chivalry in him to risk the safety of his own person again, unless he could see some direct benefit to his own interests.

"Hist, will you go back to the Iroquois?" resumed Deerslayer.

Hist rose from her bench and spoke in her own tongue.

"Tell the Iroquois, Deerslayer, that they are as ignorant as moles. The Delaware girls are not messengers to be sent like belts of wampum from tribe to tribe. They are honeysuckles that are sweetest in their own woods. Set the pine in the clay, and it will turn yellow; the willow will not flourish on the hill; the tamarack is healthiest in the swamp; the tribes of the sea love best to hear the winds that blow over the salt water. Even the robin and the marten come back year after year to their old nests; shall a woman be less true-hearted than a bird? There is no music for Wah but in the tongue she has listened to from childhood."

Deerslayer burst into one of his peculiar silent fits of laughter at the girl's eloquence.

"That's worth all the wampum in the woods!" he exclaimed. "But the Serpent has not yet spoken. Let us hear your mind, Chingachgook."

"Wampum should be sent for wampum," returned the young chief, also rising to give his answer and stretching an arm before him with a calm energy that gave emphasis to his words. "Hear what the great Serpent of the Delawares has to say to the pretended wolves from the Great Lake that are howling through our woods. They are no wolves, they are dogs that have come to get their tails and ears cropped by the Delawares. They are good at stealing young women, bad at keeping them. Chingachgook takes his own where he finds it; he asks leave of no cur from the Canadas. Tell the Iroquois dogs to howl louder if they wish a Delaware to find them in the woods, where they burrow like foxes instead of hunting like warriors."

"That's a grand message," cried Deerslayer, in delight. "It will set all the Iroquois' blood in motion. Now, Hetty, if you have anything to say, I'll carry it to the Indians faithfully."

"This lake is ours," said Hetty, softly, "and we won't leave it. Father's and mother's graves are here. God has given one country to the redmen and another to us. He meant us to live apart." Judith agreed with her simple-minded sister. She offered Deerslayer everything in the chest to use as a ransom, but

he said no; the savages would not accept anything because they thought that everything in the castle and ark was practically theirs, now.

The group soon broke up; for the hour of nine had arrived, when Hurry should commence his journey. He entered the canoe where Deerslayer was awaiting him. Hetty called in her sweet voice: —

"Good-by, dear Hurry. Take care of yourself in the woods, and don't stop till you reach the garrison."

The others were not sorry to see him go, for he was reckless and lacked the caution and the thought that were necessary to give them much protection from their enemies. He shook hands with Hetty heartily, and in another minute the two hunters were a hundred feet from the ark.

"You will do well to persuade the officers at the garrison to lead out a party against these vagabonds as soon as you get in. It won't make much difference to me, but it will make a great change in Judith's and Hetty's prospects," said Deerslayer, in a low voice, to his companion.

"And for yourself, what do you think is likely to turn up?" asked Hurry.

"The Lord in his wisdom only can tell," returned Deerslayer.

"You cannot mean to give yourself up again to the savages!" said March, angrily. "It would be the act of a mad man. What's an Indian or a word passed, or a furlough taken from creatures like them that have neither souls nor names?"

"He who thinks that he can say what he pleases in distress and that it will all pass for nothing because it is uttered in the forest and into redmen's ears, knows little of his situation, hopes, and wants," said Deerslayer, calmly.

By this time the bow of the boat had grated on the shingle of the beach. Hurry was glad to go. He could not understand the idea of honor that kept Deerslayer from breaking his word, and after saying good-by to his companion, broke recklessly through the woods. Deerslayer slowly and sadly rowed back under the stars to the castle.

In the morning Hist and Hetty awoke with the return of light, leaving Judith still buried in sleep. It did not take long for the first to complete her toilet, and leaving her companion employed in household affairs, she went on the platform to breathe the pure air of morning.

Here she found Chingachgook studying the shores of the lake, the mountains, and the heavens with the

knowledge of a man of the woods and with the gravity of an Indian. The stools used the night before were still standing on the platform, and they seated themselves. The young warrior stretched out his arms before him as if to point out the glories of a scene which was adorned by the beauty of the early morning. He swept his hand through the air. "Hugh!" he said. "This is the country of the Great Spirit Manitou, Wah. It is too good for the Iroquois, but the curs of that tribe are howling in packs through the woods. They think that the Delawares are asleep over the mountains."

"All but one of them is, Chingachgook. That one is here, and he is of the blood of Uncas," said Hist.

"The path to our villages is very long and crooked, and we shall travel it under a cloudy sky. I am afraid, too, Honeysuckle of the Hills, that we shall travel it alone. What is one warrior against a tribe?"

Hist understood that he alluded to Deerslayer, but was silent.

"The paleface has the eyes of an eagle and can see into the Iroquois' heart; he looks for no mercy. The great hunter will go back to the Iroquois to be treated like a bear. What does Wah-ta-Wah say at a moment when my dearest friend is in danger? The smallest birds sing the sweetest; it is always pleasant to listen

to their songs. I wish I could hear the Wren of the Woods in my difficulty."

"Wah-ta-Wah says that neither she nor the great Serpent could ever laugh again or ever sleep without dreaming, should the Deerslayer die under an Iroquois tomahawk, and they do nothing to save him."

They were still talking when the sun appeared over the tops of the pines and streamed down into the valley. Deerslayer came out of the cabin of the ark.

"Well," he said, smiling cheerfully at Hist, "he that sees the sun set in the west and wakes early enough in the morning will be certain to find him coming back again in the east, like a buck that is hunted round his haunts. I daresay, Hist, it never entered your mind to ask the reason."

"The palefaces know everything," said Chingachgook. "Can they tell us why the sun hides his face when he goes back at night?"

"Hark, Serpent!" said Deerslayer, gravely. "The sun, while he seems to be traveling the heavens, never budges, but it is the earth that turns around."

"How does my brother know that the earth turns around?" demanded the Indian. "Can he see it?"

"Well, that's a puzzle, I will own, Delaware, for I've often tried it, but never could fairly make it out.

You believe in the Great Spirit, and yet I conclude it would puzzle you to show where you could see him."

"Chingachgook can see him everywhere in good things, the Evil Spirit in bad. Here in the lake, there in the forest, yonder in the clouds; in Hist, in Deerslayer, in Chingachgook. The Evil Spirit is in the Iroquois, that I know; I do not see the earth turn round."

"I don't wonder they call you Serpent; no, I don't!" said Deerslayer, laughing.

"When the sun is at the top of that pine to-morrow, where will my brother be?" asked Chingachgook, abruptly.

"No mortal can say where he will be when the sun rises to-morrow. I will ask you the same question, Serpent, and should like to hear what answer you can give," returned Deerslayer.

"Both Wah and I will be with the great hunter, Deerslayer, when the sun shall be in the pine."

"The Lord bless and protect you! This is downright madness! Will your grand looks or Hist's tears and beauty change a wolf into a squirrel? No, Serpent, you must think better of this matter and leave me in the hands of God."

"Listen!" returned the Indian, earnestly. "If

Chingachgook were in the hands of the Hurons, what would my paleface brother do? Sneak off to the Delaware village and say to the chiefs and old men and young warriors, 'See, here is Wah-ta-Wah, she is safe but a little tired, and here am I, not as tired as the Honey-suckle, but just as safe.' Would he do this?"

"Attempt nothing heedlessly, Delaware. I suppose you must and will have your way. No torments the Mingos can invent can so soon break my spirit as to find that you and Hist have fallen into the power of the enemy trying to do something for my good," answered Deerslayer.

Here the conversation ended. Hetty announced that breakfast was ready, and the whole party were soon seated around the simple board.

CHAPTER XIII

A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE

At the meal hardly a syllable was exchanged, and the girls ate scarcely anything. It was early when they arose, and there still remained several hours before it would be necessary for the captive to leave his friends. Deerslayer was wholly unmoved, talking cheerfully and naturally. In order to relieve the thoughts of the whole party, he suggested trying his skill with Killdeer.

An eagle was making a wide circuit after its low swoop and now hovered over the castle at a great height. Chingachgook gazed at the bird and then said that it was impossible to strike him while he was so nearly perpendicular as to range. But he fired. The result showed how well he had calculated, the eagle not even changing his flight, but sailing around and around in his airy circle and looking down as if in contempt at his foes.

"Now, Judith, we'll see if Killdeer isn't Killeagle,

too. Give me room, Delaware, and watch the reason of this aim," cried Deerslayer.

A careful sight followed and was repeated again and again, the bird continuing to rise higher and higher. The bullet sped upward, and the next instant the bird turned on its side and came swooping down until, having described several circles around the spot, it fell heavily into the end of the ark. On examining the body, it was found that the bullet had pierced it halfway between the wing and the breast bone.

After several more tests in which Killdeer proved its worth, the Delaware got the canoe ready, and Hist made a few arrangements necessary to Deerslayer's comfort. Hetty was to accompany him to shore, for she would receive no injury at the savages' hands.

Deerslayer said a few words to each in farewell, and especially to his dear friend, Chingachgook.

"My ears are open," said the Delaware, gravely. "The words of my brother have entered so far that they can never fall out. They are like rings that have no end and cannot drop. Let him speak on; the song of the wren and the voice of a friend can never tire."

"God bless you, Serpent! God bless you! Your Manitou and my God only know when and where we shall meet again. I shall count it a great blessing and

a full reward for any little good I may have done on earth, if we shall be permitted to consort together hereafter, as we have so long done in these pleasant woods before us."

Chingachgook waved his hand, and drawing the light blanket he wore over his head, he withdrew into the cabin to indulge in his sorrow alone. Deerslayer determined to start now without any further show of feelings either from himself or the others. The canoe soon left the platform with only Hetty and the young hunter, and rapidly glided to the shore toward the point where Deerslayer knew his enemies expected him.

It lacked but two or three minutes of noon when he landed. The American Indian always thought his moral victories the noblest, prizing the groans and yielding of his victims under torture more than the trophy of his scalp. Therefore when Deerslayer advanced with a steady tread toward the group of chiefs that were seated on a fallen tree, an exclamation of surprise and admiration escaped every mouth. They had been divided in their opinion whether the paleface would return or not. A large raft of logs had been prepared to use to attack the castle and ark at once if Deerslayer had not come back.

It was an imposing scene. All the older warriors

were seated on the trunk of the fallen tree. On the right stood the young men armed, while the left was occupied by the women and children. In the center was an open space from which the underbrush and dead leaves had been removed. The two chiefs of the council, Panther and our old friend, Rivenoak, sat side by side.

"Here I am, Mingos," said Deerslayer, firmly, "here I am. I am your prisoner; do with me what you will."

Rivenoak arose and stretched his arms before him and said: —

"Paleface, you are honest. My people are happy in having captured a man and not a skulking fox. We now know you. We shall treat you like a brave."

Three or four young men now fell back from the armed group and disappeared. Then it was signified to the prisoner that he was at liberty to go at large on the point until a council was held to decide his fate. The young men formed a line of sentinels across the point inland. Escape was impossible. By these arrangements the paleface was given to understand that since he had come back from his furlough, he could try to escape, and they would not consider it dishonorable.

Deerslayer walked around the point, but a hundred watchful eyes were turned toward him. Since they had possession of the canoe, he knew the lake offered no advantages, otherwise he would have been able to swim as far as the castle. The case was desperate.

After an hour of idle wandering on his part and consulting on the Iroquois' part, the savages summoned him. They told him that if he would live with them and become Indian in his habits and mode of life, they would take him in exchange for the chief he had killed a few days before.

"I'm white, Iroquois," said Deerslayer, "and Christian born. You might as well expect to see the blackberry growing on the pine."

The words were no sooner out of his mouth than the chief, Panther, lifted his arm.

"Dog of the palefaces!" he cried in Iroquois, "go yell among the curs of your own evil hunting ground!" and hurled his tomahawk.

Luckily his loud voice drew Deerslayer's attention, and he stretched out his arm and caught the weapon readily. His eye kindled, and a small red spot appeared on each cheek. He threw back the tomahawk with all his strength. The keen little ax struck Panther between the eyes and killed him on the spot.

There was a breathless instant, then the white man bounded off with the activity of a deer. The whole band, old and young, raised the yell of alarm and followed.

Deerslayer held his way toward the lake and ran some forty or fifty yards along the shore; then he darted through the line of bushes and issued in the open woods. Several rifles were discharged and more followed. Bullets whistled past him. He had gained a hundred yards before the Iroquois had any order or method in the chase. The best runners threw their rifles on the ground and called out to the women and boys to load them again as soon as possible.

The young hunter knew that his only hope was to run in a straight line. He held his way up a hill, which was not steep but painfully tiresome. The Iroquois were whooping and leaping behind him. Reaching the summit, he glanced eagerly in every direction in search of a cover. A fallen tree lay near. To leap on this and force himself as close as possible under its lowest side, was the work of an instant. Before he did this, however, he stood on the height and gave a yell of triumph at the sight of the slope before him, as if he were about to rush down it. The next moment he was stretched beneath the tree.

He was gaining breath, and his heart soon ceased to throb so violently. The footsteps of his pursuers were now audible. Each leaped upon the tree above him and plunged into the ravine. Indian followed Indian until he hoped all had passed, and he counted them as the surest mode of ascertaining how many could be behind. Presently all were in the bottom of the glen, quite a hundred feet below him.

Hoping now to steal away unseen, Deerslayer threw himself over the tree and fell on the upper side. He thought he was safe and walked swiftly back the way he had come, toward the height, a distance of ten yards. No sooner did he reach it than he was seen, and the chase renewed.

Some turned to the south and some toward the lake to cut him off. He was now surrounded on three sides. The last hope he had lay in the canoe. He would have to pass the bullets of three or four rifles held by the women, for the men had all discarded their arms. As he approached the point, several old women and children were passed. They tried to throw dried branches between his legs, but he had inspired so much terror that none dared come very near.

Plunging through the bushes, our hero found himself once more by the lake and within fifty feet of the canoe.

Here he ceased to run, for his breath was now all-important to him. He even stooped and scooped up some water to drink. Now he was by the side of the boat. The paddles had been removed!

A yell behind him gave him no time to think of his disappointment. He ran off into the water, bearing the canoe before him, and threw all his strength and skill into a last effort, and fell into the bottom of the light craft. Here he lay on his back, both to recover his breath and to protect himself from bullets. He watched the boat's movements by studying the tops of the trees on the mountain side. His condition had not been one half as tantalizing that day as it was at this moment.

He lay perfectly still. Suddenly all the voices on shore ceased, and a deathlike stillness reigned. If only he could get far enough out, he might attract the attention of those in the castle, and they would not fail to come to his relief with other canoes.

He took out a knife and was about to cut a hole through the bark in order to get a view of shore, when a rifle was fired and a ball pierced both sides of the canoe. Hitching his body along, he got his eye at the bullet hole and saw that he was drifting in a southerly direction.

Before quitting the shore, he had thrown a dead branch in the boat. Removing his cap, he put it on the end of this stick and first let it appear over the edge of the canoe as far as possible from his own person in order that they might think that it was his head, and fire there. To show their contempt of this trick, a bullet was fired directly through another part of the canoe, which actually grazed his skin.

He lay passive a few moments longer, then tried another expedient. He attempted to row with the stick, holding it over the side. A bullet soon broke it in two. Twenty minutes passed, and he began to grow impatient. The profound stillness troubled him. Closing his eyes, he awaited results. Ten minutes more may have passed, when he heard a slight noise like a low rubbing against the bottom of the canoe.

He opened his eyes and found that a canopy of leaves was directly over his head. Starting to his feet, the first object that met his eyes was Rivenoak, who had drawn the canoe on land. Some change of air had gently driven the boat to shore.

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE HANDS OF THE IROQUOIS

"Come," said the Iroquois, "my young friend has sailed about until he is tired; he will forget how to run again unless he uses his legs."

"You've the best of it, Iroquois," returned Deerslayer, stepping from the canoe; and he followed his leader to the open space.

Of all the band that had so lately thronged the area, Rivenoak alone was visible. The rest seemed to have totally abandoned the spot. Even the furniture, arms, and other property of the camp had entirely disappeared. So sudden a change caused Deerslayer a good deal of surprise. He suspected, however, that a change of encampment was intended in order to work on his fears.

Rivenoak walked up the vista of trees and disappeared behind the covers of the forest, leaving Deerslayer by himself. The young man knew his enemies too well to fancy himself free. Affecting an indifference he was far from feeling, he strolled about, getting nearer and nearer to the spot where he had landed. He suddenly quickened his pace, though he avoided all

appearance of flight, and pushing aside the bushes, he stepped upon the beach.

The canoe was gone, nor could he see any traces of it. He now better understood his situation. He was watched beyond a question and with no other means of escape than swimming. He gazed wistfully toward the castle, but all there seemed silent and desolate. A feeling of loneliness and desertion came over him to increase the gloom of the moment.

"God's will be done!" he murmured, as he walked sorrowfully away from the beach, entering again beneath the arches of the wood. "A few more winters and a few more summers and my days would have been over, anyway."

In the open space, to his surprise, he found Hetty alone awaiting his arrival.

"What has become of all the Indians, Hetty?" asked he; "and why do they let you roam about the point as if you too were prisoner?"

"I'm no prisoner, Deerslayer, but a free girl and go when and where I please. Nobody dare hurt me! The Iroquois are up yonder in the woods and keep a good watch on us both."

Here the stirring of leaves and cracking of dried twigs interrupted them, and Deerslayer knew that

his enemies were approaching. The Iroquois closed around the spot that had been prepared for the coming scene, and in the center of which Deerslayer now stood as in a circle. There was no opening through which the prisoner could break. When Rivenoak reappeared, he occupied his old place at the head of the open space. A grave silence pervaded the place. Two or three of the young men held thongs of bark with which the prisoner was to be bound.

"Killer of the deer," said Rivenoak, with both calmness and dignity, "it is time that my people knew their minds. The sun is no longer over our heads; tired of waiting on the Iroquois, he has begun to fall near the pines on this side of the valley."

When he had finished speaking, he directed the proper persons to bind the captive, and Deerslayer submitted without resistance. As soon as his body was withed in bark, he was carried to a tree and bound against it. His cap was removed, and he was left half standing, half sustained by his bonds, to face the coming trial in the best manner he could.

No sooner did the young warriors understand that they were at liberty to commence than some of the boldest and most forward sprang into the arena, tomahawk in hand. Their object was to strike the tree

to which the captive was bound as near as possible to his head, yet without hitting him. It was one of the commonest expedients of the savages on such occasions to put the nerves of their victims to the severest proofs. Our hero maintained an appearance of self-possession. He had made up his mind to meet his fate with a calmness that should do credit to his color and his manhood.

Raven was the name of the first youth who presented himself for the trial. After a suitable number of flourishes, the tomahawk whirled through the air and cut a chip from the sapling to which the prisoner was bound, within a few inches of his cheek, and stuck in a large oak several yards behind. There was a murmur of admiration at the steadiness with which the captive stood his trial. He kept his body immovable, and did not even shut his eyes.

Moose came next. He poised his little ax but an instant. Deerslayer was not touched. The tomahawk buried itself deep beneath the soft bark of the tree behind him.

Now Bounding Boy came. He leaped into the circle like a hound or goat at play and skipped about in front of the prisoner, now on one side, now on another, until Deerslayer's patience became exhausted.

"Throw your tomahawk, Mingo!" he cried. "Why

do you keep loping about like a faun? Throw or the Iroquois girls will laugh in your face!"

This excited Bounding Boy to fury. His aim was uncertain, and his was the first weapon to injure Deerslayer, very slightly however.

Hetty all this time had been seated among the women hiding her face in grief. She had spoken to the Indians in her usual gentle tones and asked them to spare Deerslayer's life; but the chief had courteously bidden her to go among the women, and poor Hetty could do nothing but obey.

Rivenoak told his people that the paleface had stood one trial, and now he would be put to the test of the rifle. Shot after shot was fired at the hunter's head, without touching it. Still no one could detect even the twitching of a muscle or the slightest winking of an eye on the part of the captive.

"You may call this shooting, Mingos!" he exclaimed at last in contempt, "but there are squaws among the Delawares that can outdo you. Undo my arms, put a rifle in my hands, and I'll pin the thinnest warlock in your party to any tree you can show me, and this at a hundred yards!"

A low murmur followed this taunt. Rivenoak moved into the center of the group.

"I see how it is," he said. "We have bound the Deerslayer too tight; the thongs keep his limbs from shaking, and his eyes from shutting. Loosen him! Let us see what his own body is really made of!"

Several hands were immediately at work cutting and tearing the ropes of bark from the body of the hunter. In half a minute Deerslayer stood as free from bonds as when an hour before he commenced his flight on the side of the mountain. He was allowed to rub his limbs, to stamp his feet, and move about to regain the circulation. His plans had now all changed. Although he had been resigned to his fate, he was not anxious to die. He again became the quick-witted, ingenious, and determined woodsman, alive to his own power and resources.

There was a pause. An announcement had been made by one of the lookouts, a boy of ten or twelve years. Deerslayer could see that the women were much agitated, while the warriors rested on their arms. In a minute the mystery came to an end. Judith appeared in the circle. Deerslayer was startled. He knew that she would not go free from harm, as her simple-minded sister did, but he was more startled at her appearance.

She was clad in the magnificent brocade gown that

(Facing page 174)

"She was clad in the magnificent brocade gown."

you will remember they had found in the chest a day or two before. Its gay colors, glossy satins, and rich laces affected the savages as she had hoped. The grim old warriors said, "Ugh!" and the young men and women exclaimed in admiration.

CHAPTER XV

THE IROQUOIS ARE DRIVEN FROM THE LAKE

"WHICH of these warriors is the principal chief?" demanded Judith, of Deerslayer. "My errand is too important to be delivered to any of inferior rank. First explain to the Mingos what I say, and then give an answer to the question I have put."

Deerslayer quietly obeyed and pointed out Rivenoak.

"Listen to my words, Iroquois," continued Judith, turning to the chief. "Your eyes tell you that I am no common woman. I will not say that I am queen of this country — she is far off — but there are many degrees of rank under our gracious monarch; one of these I fill. I wish to lead back with me this great hunter of whom I have need to keep my house in venison."

Rivenoak was a ready speaker, and he answered promptly when Judith's words had been rendered into the Indian dialect.

"This hunter cannot quit my young men, now. I hear a strange bird singing. It has very rich feathers. They will be ashamed to go back to their village and

tell their people that they let their prisoner go on account of this strange bird and not be able to give the *name* of this bird."

"You can ask my name of your prisoner," returned the girl. "It is Judith, and there is a great deal of the history of Judith in the paleface's best book, the Bible."

"No," said the wily chief, speaking in English, "I not ask prisoner, he tired; he want to rest. I ask my daughter with feeble mind. Come here, daughter; you answer. What her name?"

"That's Judith, my sister Judith, Thomas Hutter's daughter, Hutter whom you called the Muskrat. He lived in a house on the water," answered Hetty.

Judith saw that all was lost. She had the idea of frightening the savages by the thought of her rank and wealth, but Hetty had spoiled all. They would not accept a daughter of the Muskrat as a princess or a great lady.

"It will not do, Judith!" cried Deerslayer. "It was a bold idea, but yonder Rivenoak is an uncommon man. It would have been better had you stayed in the ark or castle."

Judith moved past him carelessly.

"Half an hour is all in all to us," she said in a low tone. "None of your friends are idle."

The savages were angry now. They determined to lose no more time, and Deerslayer was once more fastened to the tree. A pile of brush and branches was placed near and lighted. No sooner had the flames begun to wave their forked tongues close to the hunter's face than Hetty armed with a stick rushed through the wood and scattered the blazing pile in a dozen different directions.

"Cruel, heartless Iroquois!" she cried indignantly. "Would you burn a man as you would a log of wood?"

A gesture from Rivenoak caused the scattered brands to be collected. Fresh wood was brought and the flames were kindling a second time, when an Indian girl pushed through the circle and with her foot dashed aside the lighted twigs.

A yell followed this second disappointment, but when the offender turned toward the circle and showed the face of Hist, young and old crowded around the girl, in haste to demand an explanation of her sudden and unlooked-for return.

Following closely at the girl's heels came a young warrior who bounded into the very center of the circle. Three leaps carried him to Deerslayer's side, and the thongs were cut in the twinkling of an eye. The astonished Iroquois saw the noble brow, fine person, and

eagle eye of a young warrior in the paint of a Delaware. He held a rifle in each hand. One was Killdeer, which he immediately gave into the hands of its owner.

"Iroquois," said the warrior, "the earth is very big. The Great Lakes are big, too; there is room beyond them for the Iroquois; there is room for the Delawares on this side. I am Chingachgook, the son of Uncas. That paleface is my friend. My heart was heavy when I missed him. I followed him into your camp to see that no harm happened to him. All the Delaware girls are waiting for Wah. Come! let us say farewell and go on our path."

"Iroquois, this is your mortal enemy, the great Serpent of them you hate!" cried Rivenoak, and cast his knife at the breast of the Delaware. A quick movement of Hist, who stood near, turned aside the blow, the weapon burying its point in a pine.

At this instant a sound unusual in the woods was heard, and every Iroquois paused to listen. The sound was regular and heavy as if the earth were struck with beetles. Objects became visible among the trees of the background, and a body of troops was seen advancing with measured tread. They came upon the charge, the scarlet of the king's livery shining among the bright green foliage of the forest.

The scene that followed is not easily described. Wild confusion, despair, and frenzied efforts were blended. The Iroquois were taken at a fearful disadvantage. On three sides were water, on the fourth a steady line of sixty gleaming bayonets. Each warrior rushed for his arms and then all on the point — men, women, and children — eagerly sought the covers. Deerslayer's first care was to place Judith and Hist behind trees; Hetty had been hurried away in the crowd of Iroquois women. The young hunter then followed the trained men in pursuit of the enemy.

When the assault was over and the dead and wounded collected, poor Hetty was found mortally wounded by a rifle bullet, whether through a mistake on the part of a soldier or on the part of an Iroquois was never known.

When the sun arose the following morning, every sign of hostility had vanished from the basin of the Glimmerglass. The birds were again skimming the water or were seen poised on the wing high above the tops of the tallest trees. The water was placid, and all was as sunny and smiling as if nothing extraordinary had ever occurred.

"This lake will soon be entirely deserted," said Judith to Deerslayer. "It is not likely that I shall

ever see it again, and it contains the bodies of my father, mother, and sister."

They were seated in the canoe, following the ark, which was under the direction of the soldiers. The castle had been securely locked, and Judith had placed herself under the protection of the captain to go to the nearest garrison, where she would find friends to take care of her.

When she and Deerslayer landed, Chingachgook and Hist were waiting for the white man. The soldiers had set the ark adrift and were marching through the woods. Judith with many tears and a sad heart bade her three friends farewell and followed her protectors.

Deerslayer and the two Indians camped that night on the head waters of their own river, and the evening after, they entered the village of the Delaware tribe.

The war that then had its rise was stirring and bloody. The Delaware chief won great distinction among his people; and Deerslayer, under the name of "Hawkeye," spread his fame far and near until the crack of his rifle became as terrible to the Iroquois as the thunder of the Manitou.

CONCLUSION

FIFTEEN years passed before it was in the power of Deerslayer and Chingachgook to revisit the Glimmerglass. A boy accompanied them, Chingachgook's son. They reached the lake as the sun was setting. All was unchanged. The river still rushed through its bower of trees; the mountains stood in their native dress, dark, rich, and mysterious, while the sheet of water glistened in the solitude, a beautiful gem of the forest.

The following morning the boy discovered one of the canoes drifted on the shore in a state of decay. They repaired it and embarked, desiring to examine the place. Chingachgook pointed out to his son the spot where the Iroquois had encamped, and the point where he had succeeded in stealing Hist.

The remains of the castle were still visible. The winter storms had unroofed the house; the logs were decayed, and the palisadoes rotting. A few more gales and tempests would sweep all into the lake.

The ark was discovered stranded on the eastern

shore. It was filled with water, and the cabin unroofed. Deerslayer's heart beat quick when he found a ribbon of Judith's fluttering from a decaying log.

Chingachgook and his friend left the place with melancholy feelings. It had been the region of their first warpath. They went on to the Mohawk in silence, to rush, however, into new adventures as stirring and as remarkable as those which had befallen them on this lovely lake.

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